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MARCH 10

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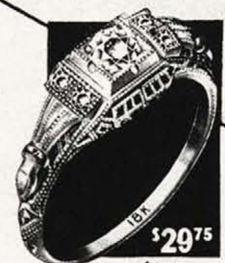

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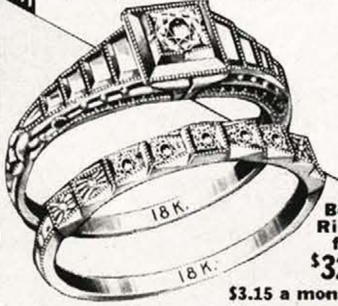
HC-14 . . Elegantly hand pierced and engraved, 18-K solid white gold ring; dazzling, genuine blue-white diamond in the square prong center, FOUR smaller genuine diamonds on sides. Special price $29.75—*only* $2.88 *a mo.*



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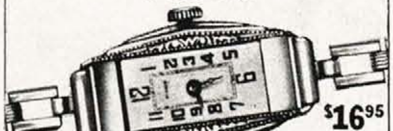

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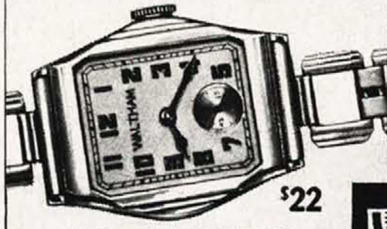
HC-9 . . . Elegantly engraved modern Baguette type wrist watch, white lifetime case; fully guaranteed movement; latest link bracelet to match. $16.95—*only* $1.59 *a month.*



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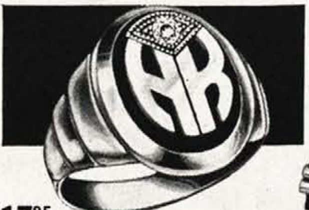

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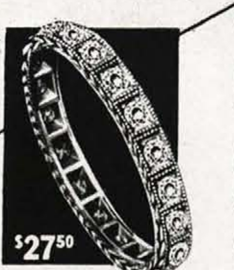

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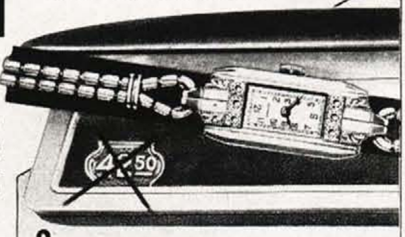
HC-16 . . All diamond wedding ring at our new low price—only $27.50. Richly hand engraved 18-K solid white gold; 20 dazzling, genuine diamonds. Exquisitely beautiful and very specially priced. *Only* $2.65 *a month.*



6 DIAMOND BAGUETTE WRIST WATCH $29.75

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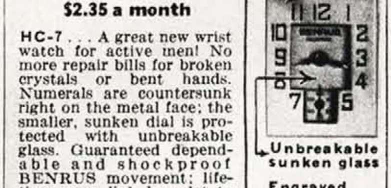
HC-11 . . . Exquisitely engraved, dainty, Baguette Wrist Watch, adorned with six fiery, genuine diamonds; fully guaranteed dependable movement. Lovely, barrel-link bracelet to match. One of the greatest values we have seen in years. Very specially priced at $29.75—*only* $2.88 *a month.*



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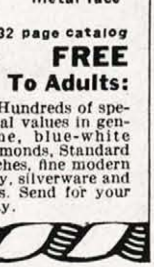
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Vol. CV EVERY WEEK No. 5

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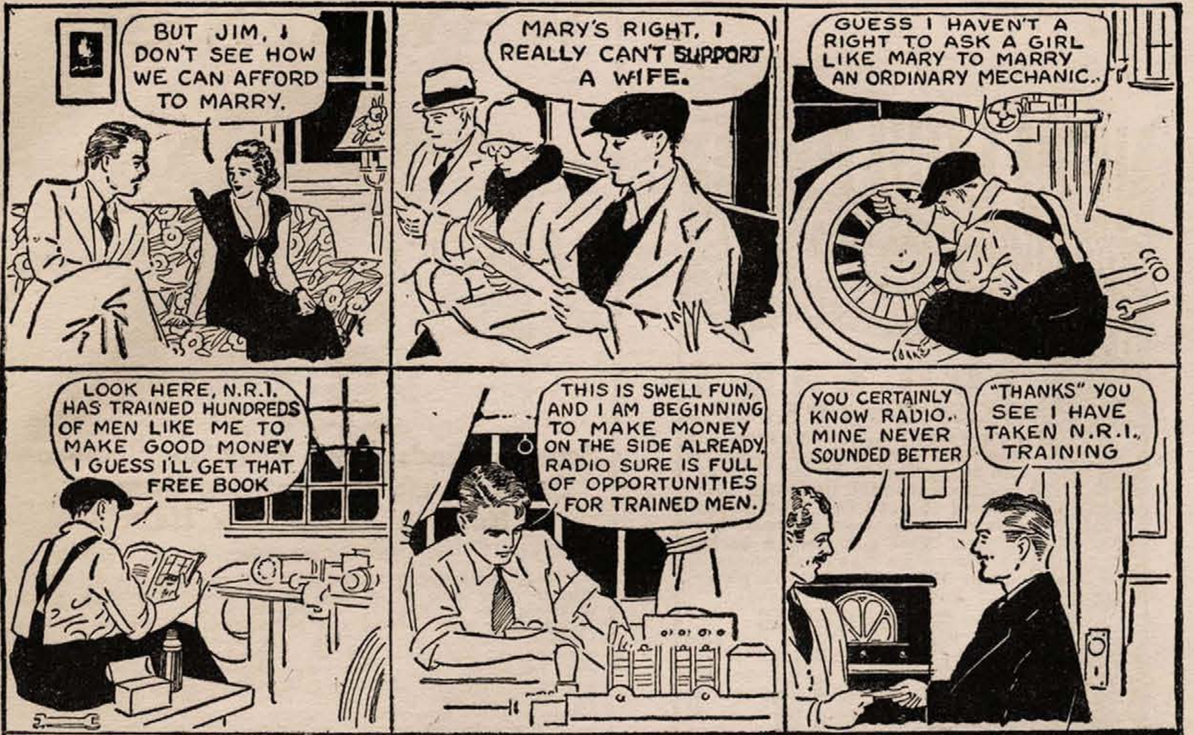
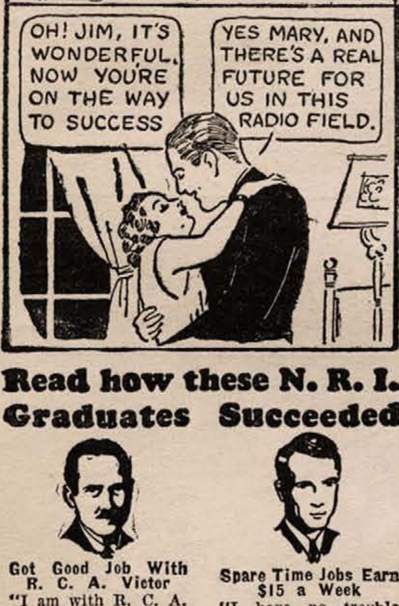

BUT JIM, I DON'T SEE HOW WE CAN AFFORD TO MARRY.
MARY'S RIGHT, I REALLY CAN'T SUPPORT A WIFE.
GUESS I HAVEN'T A RIGHT TO ASK A GIRL LIKE MARY TO MARRY AN ORDINARY MECHANIC.
LOOK HERE, N.R.I. HAS TRAINED HUNDREDS OF MEN LIKE ME TO MAKE GOOD MONEY I GUESS I'LL GET THAT FREE BOOK
THIS IS SWELL FUN, AND I AM BEGINNING TO MAKE MONEY ON THE SIDE ALREADY. RADIO SURE IS FULL OF OPPORTUNITIES FOR TRAINED MEN.
YOU CERTAINLY KNOW RADIO. MINE NEVER SOUNDED BETTER
"THANKS" YOU SEE I HAVE TAKEN N.R.I. TRAINING


OH! JIM, IT'S WONDERFUL, NOW YOU'RE ON THE WAY TO SUCCESS
YES MARY, AND THERE'S A REAL FUTURE FOR US IN THIS RADIO FIELD.

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Mail the coupon now. Get the facts about Radio—the field with a future. N. R. I. training fits you for jobs in connection with the manufacture, sale and operation of Radio equipment. It fits you to go in business for yourself, service sets, operate on board ships, in broadcasting, television, aircraft, police Radio and many other jobs. My FREE book tells how you quickly learn at home to be a Radio Expert.

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Hold your job. I'll not only train you in a few hours of your spare time a week, but the day you enroll I'll send you instructions, which you should master quickly, for doing 28 Radio jobs common in most every neighborhood. I give you Radio Equipment for conducting experiments and making tests that teach you to build and service practically every type of receiving set made. Cleo T. Retter, 30 W. Beechwood Ave., Dayton, Ohio, wrote: "Working only in spare time, I made about $1,500 while taking the Course."

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My book has shown hundreds of fellows how to make more money and win success. It's FREE to any ambitious fellow over 15 years of age. Investigate. Find out what Radio offers you. Read what my Employment Department does to help you get into Radio after graduation—about my Money Back Agreement, and the many other N. R. I. features. Mail the coupon in an envelope, or paste it on a 1c post card, for your copy TODAY.

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National Radio Institute, Washington, D. C.

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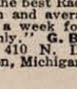
"I am with R. C. A. Victor. I have been promoted several times. As I progressed my salary has ranged from $30 to $70 a week." **Louis F. Lyet**, 277 Harvey St., Philadelphia, Pa.



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"I have no trouble getting Radio work. I have the reputation of being the best Radio man in town and average $15 to $20 a week for spare time only." **G. Bernard Croy**, 410 N. Douglas, Bronson, Michigan.

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29x5.00-19	2.85	1.05
30x5.00-20	2.85	1.05
28x5.25-18	2.90	1.15
29x5.25-19	2.95	1.15
30x5.25-20	2.95	1.15
31x5.25-21	3.25	1.15
28x5.50-18	3.35	1.15
29x5.50-19	3.35	1.15
30x6.00-18	3.40	1.15
31x6.00-19	3.40	1.15
32x6.00-20	3.45	1.25
33x6.00-21	3.65	1.25
32x6.50-20	3.75	1.35

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32x4	2.95	.85
33x4	2.95	.85
34x4	3.25	.85
32x4½	3.35	1.15
33x4½	3.45	1.15
34x4½	3.45	1.15
30x5	3.65	1.35
33x5	3.75	1.45
35x5	3.95	1.55

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WHY MEN GO

Science Finds New Way to Remove Germ Cause and Activate Dormant Roots to Grow New Hair.

(Read Free Offer)

A germ called "Flask Bacilla of Unna" gets deep into the scalp skin in many cases of abnormal hair deficiency, causing a most dangerous type of dandruff. It clogs up pores and hair follicles, causing itchy scalp, falling hair and prevents dormant hair roots (papilla) from growing new hair. The germ is seldom suspected. Washing and shampooing and use of tonics, ointments and lotions don't remove the cause. They merely cleanse and treat the surface and roll off the outer skin like water rolls off the back of a duck. No wonder baldness is increasing.

Now a new discovery enables people who have dandruff, falling hair, thin hair and baldness to harmlessly remove the congested, thin outer layer of scalp skin. This permits opened pores to breathe in air, sunshine and absorb a penetrating, stimulating scalp-food to activate the smothered, dormant hair roots and grow new hair. It is the most sensational discovery in the history of falling hair and baldness. It is all explained in a new treatise called "GROW HAIR," showing "anatomy of your hair" and tells what to do. This treatise is now being mailed FREE to all who write for it. Send no money, just name and address to Dermolav Lab., Desk H 381, No. 1700 Broadway, New York, N. Y., and you get it by return mail free and postpaid. If pleased, tell your friends about it.

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> The future welfare of thousands of deserving men who heed this announcement may be vitally affected. Many who have been beset with financial distress can find prompt and permanent relief from their money worries.

FOR YEAR 'ROUND INCOME

Stop and think how wonderful it would be to have a nice income every week in the year. No more tramping around looking for work. No more "penny pinching". Have money to help pay your nagging bills—buy clothing—pay off the mortgage—buy yourself a home—put money in the bank—or whatever your heart desires. That's the kind of a business opportunity I am offering you.

TEA AND COFFEE ROUTES PAY BEST

Everybody knows there is nothing better than a good weekly route for a fine, steady income. These Tea and Coffee Routes pay far better than most because you supply nearly 300 products — things people use daily in order to live. You simply take care of customers' orders on the route in your locality. You collect all the cash and keep a big share of it just for looking after the orders, delivering the goods, and taking care of the business. I furnish you with hundreds of fine premiums and special bargain offers—premiums to give away with Tea, Coffee, Spices, Extracts, Baking Powder and other fine products. Hundreds are now waiting to be served in many localities. Daily and weekly earnings mount steadily where you call on your route regularly.

YOUR OWN FOOD PRODUCTS AT WHOLESALE PRICES

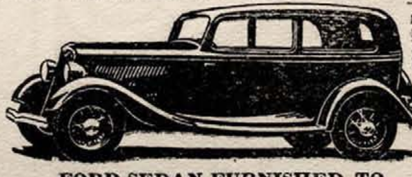
When I send you instructions for making money on my new neighborhood Tea and Coffee Route Plan I also give you rock-bottom wholesale prices on your own groceries and household necessities. This is in addition to your regular daily earnings, so you *make* big money in cash and *save* big money on the things you use in your home.

GO TO WORK AT ONCE!

My new plan provides immediate cash earnings. As long as you are honest and reliable you are eligible for one of these routes. I want some one in every territory because I have opened up my big plant to full capacity. I am going to help a lot more people earn more money at once. You can have one of these good paying routes right in your own locality right near where you live. Better send name today.

EXPERIENCE OR TRAINING UNNECESSARY

I am not nearly as much interested in your past experience as I am in your willingness to follow a few plain instructions that will tell you the inside workings of this profitable business. I will explain just how you go about placing Tea, Coffee, Spices, Extracts and Household Products with the customers on your route. I furnish everything. There is no stock to carry—you fill your orders from my big factory stock. You have entire charge of everything.



FORD SEDAN FURNISHED TO PRODUCERS;AS AN EXTRA BONUS NOT A CONTEST OR A PRIZE

NO MORE "PENNY PINCHING"

If you have been working for a boss and your pay has been limited and you are weary of pinching and striving to exist, here's an opportunity to change all this. With my route plan you can stop time-clock punching forever. If you want earnings that run up to $42.50 a week you can have them. Your weekly income is limited only by the time you give to the business. The more time you devote to my wonderful Route Plan, the more money you make for yourself. That's the kind of an offer I am making to you.

LOOK AT THESE UNUSUAL EARNINGS

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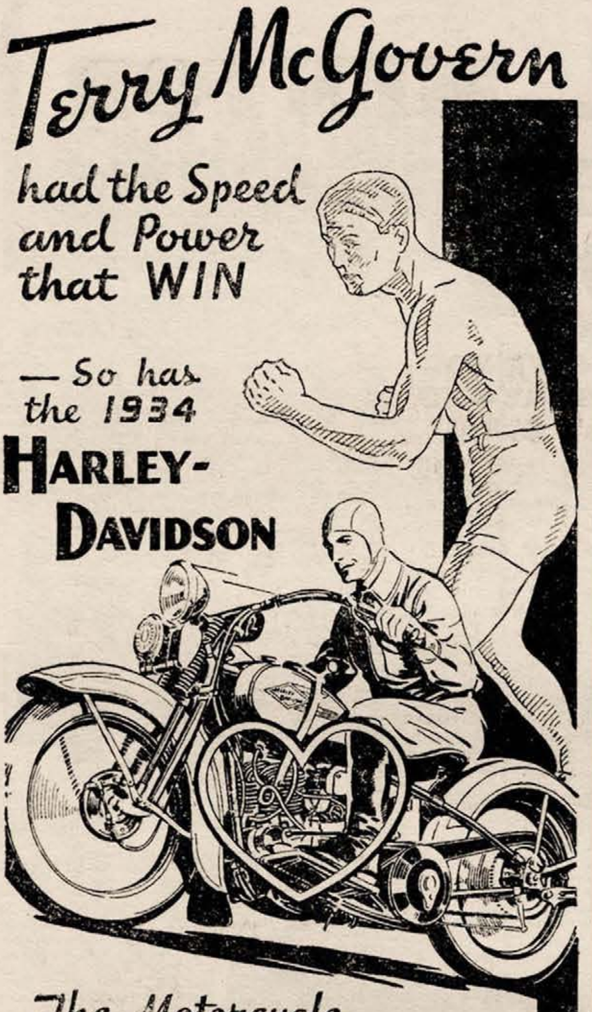

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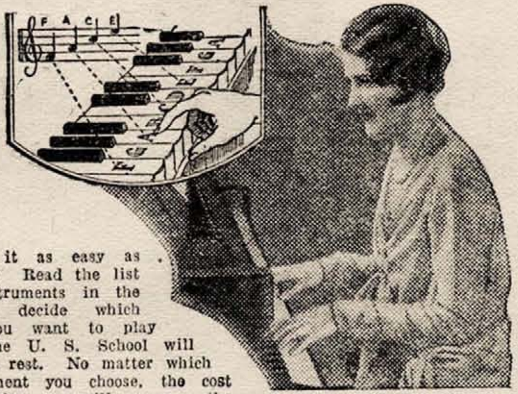

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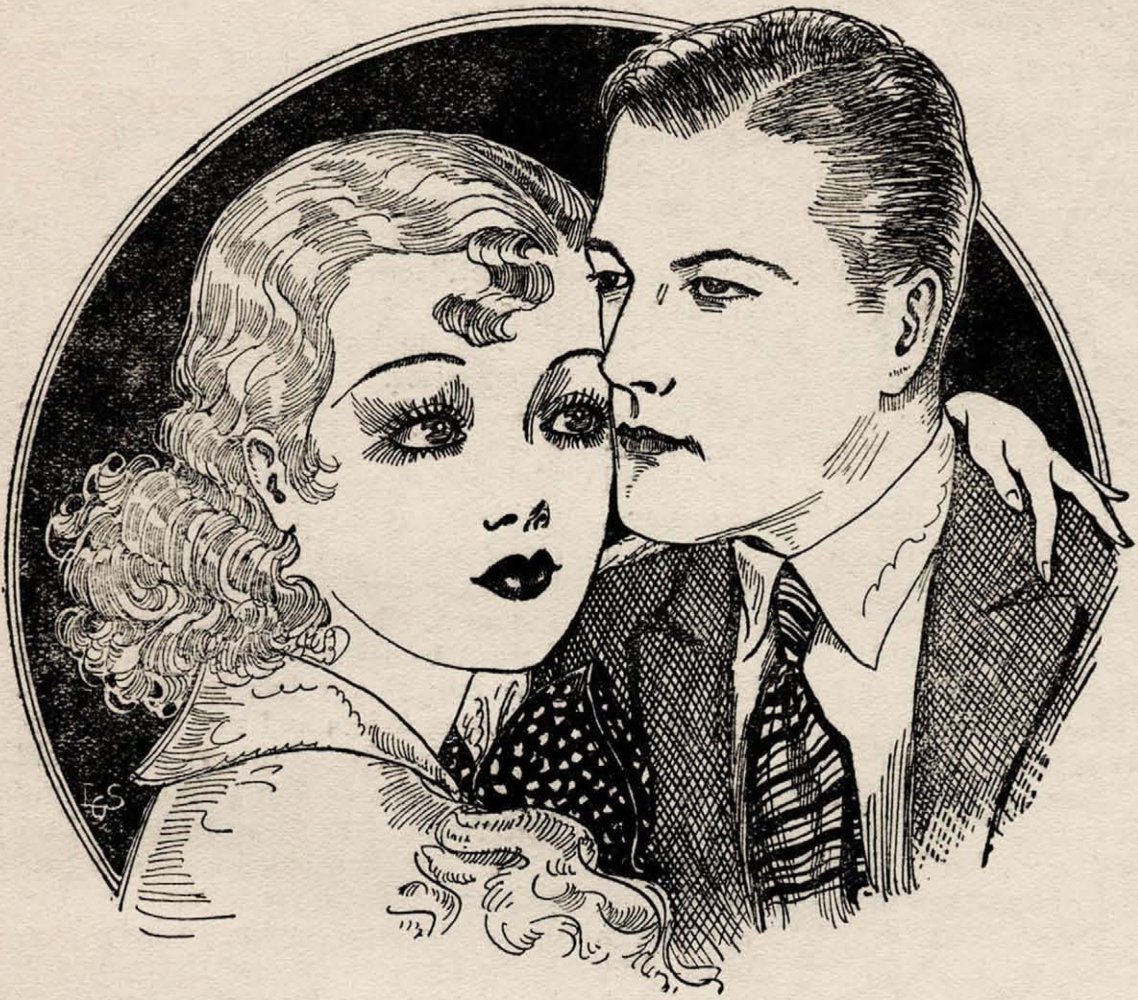


Extra Sheer

By Knight Jessee

FRAN dusted all the wax figures twice. Still, Bill didn't come. The waiting began to get on her nerves. This was the fourth time she had had to wait for him this week. She bit her lip angrily.

The bell tinkled as the door opened. Fran whirled about. Then: "Oh, Mr. van Erp!" she said.

Derek van Erp looked at her. His blue eyes were very intent. She always had the feeling that he could read exactly what she was thinking. "You were expecting some one else, weren't you? Sorry I'm not the person. But won't I do?"

Fran adored the fit of his suit, and his spats and his cane, and the gray gloves he held so nonchalantly in his left hand. If Bill would only dress like that! But Bill was the sort of fellow who thought putting on a clean collar more than once a week was effeminate.

"It's really after hours, Mr. van Erp," Fran said primly. "But since I'm here, is there anything I can get for you?"

He smiled. "You could get me a million dollars, perhaps. Or happiness. Or love." He said the last word very low.

Fran's cheeks went pink. She almost forgot she was in love with Bill whenever Mr. van Erp came into the store. Mr. van Erp made her feel queer and breathless; as though she had been running a long race and was just in sight of the goal.

Impulsively, she spoke: "Why you don't have to wish for things. You have everything—money, position." Her voice trailed away.

The smile died out of Mr. van Erp's eyes. "I have nothing!" he exclaimed bitterly. "My wealth consists of forty dollars in cash. I got that by selling my entire wardrobe. The clothes I have on are all I have left. Material possessions, that is. Of course I possess a broken heart—if that could be classed as an asset! And I mustn't forget cranky old Uncle Laurence! He's despised me all my life. If he knew I was going in for carnival life, what a laugh he'd get!"

Fran gripped the edge of the counter. "You mean you're broke, Mr. van Erp? Really broke? A rich, important man like you?"

Derek looked ill at ease. "Sorry I flared out. I didn't mean to. But I've been pretending so long, that it was a relief to tell the truth for a change."

Fran felt a queer, constricted sensation around her heart. "The wax-works figures you've been buying. You don't mean—— Oh, Mr. van Erp! I thought of course you were joking! You couldn't intend to have a wax-works show at Coney! A—a social-register fellow like you!" Her eyes were swimming with tears.

Derek didn't notice. He was touching the tip of his well-polished shoe with the ferrule of his cane. "I could cadge from my friends, I suppose, or depend on invitations at house parties to see me through. Or go down on my knees to Uncle Laurence. But that sort of thing never appealed, somehow. No. This is better. The Van Erps bequeathed me just one legacy. A wax-works show! Those dusty, broken figures have been stacked for years in the Van Erp attic. Now, I'm going to make them support me!"

"I never would have fixed those figures, if I'd thought you were in earnest!" cried Fran. "I imagined, of course, that you were going to have some sort of party, using the wax figures."

Derek looked straight into her eyes. "Nice of you to be so worried about me, little golden-haired girl! I love it. I eat it up! Especially since another blonde sent me back my ring the minute she knew the market had wiped me out. Now, I want to ask a favor of you. I've just two things left in this world. The wax works and my pride! Tonight, I'm dropping out of my old world. Disappearing. None of my friends are ever going to know that Derek van Erp is a wax-works proprietor! Silly of me, of course. But I'd go to any lengths to keep anybody from knowing. So will you keep my secret for me, golden girl?"

Confusedly, Fran murmured: "Of course I'll never tell, Mr. van Erp. Cross my heart! But you don't know anything about Coney Island! Why, I'll bet you've never even been out there!"

"Don't bet, or you'll lose! I've haunted the place for weeks. Three days ago I bought my location and moved the figures out. Last night I opened." He frowned. "Not much business yet."

Fran thought back. "You bought an Abraham Lincoln and a Napoleon, didn't you? From us, I mean?"

He nodded. "And you fixed Marie Antoinette's face and McKinley's leg and Julius Cæsar's neck. They look as good as new."

Fran looked away. "Mr. Krause charged you top price. Because he thought you were rich. I'm so sorry. If we'd known!"

Mr. van Erp seemed to grow taller. "I'm not yet accepting charity!" he said stiffly. "What I buy, I pay for."

Hastily, Fran asked: "What is it you want to-day, Mr. van Erp?"

He drew a small package out of his coat pocket. "I came for advice. I didn't like the cotton stockings Marie Antoinette was wearing, so I got these. But I wasn't at all sure of the size, and the clerk said they couldn't be returned if they were tried on—even by a wax figure. So will you see if they're correct?"

Fran took out a pair of extra-sheer pearl-gray stockings. She caught her breath. "They're lovely!" she cried. Unconsciously, her tone was wistful. "And I'm sure they'll fit." She caressed the stockings gently with the tips of her fingers. Fran wore service hose. They lasted longer.

Suddenly she looked at Derek. "Mr. Krause said that if you came into the store, you were to have a Chinese mandarin we have in the basement," she said recklessly, making up the story as she went along. "We—we give a sort of bonus to our best patrons. It—it's on the house!"

"Oh!" Derek exclaimed. "That—that's rather liberal, isn't it?"

The Chinese mandarin had been in the basement for two years. Mr. Krause had taken it on consignment and the owner had never returned for the figure. Mr. Krause had forgotten it was even there. The gift of the figure might make up in some measure for the overcharging Mr. Krause had done, Fran thought.

"The figure is in the storeroom. I'll get it," Fran added.

Derek insisted on following her down into the cluttered, dusty storage basement. The one dust-covered light in the place went out, just as they reached the bottom step. Fran gave a little startled scream. Instantly, Derek's hand was on her wrist, steadying her. "I've a flash in my pocket. Just a moment." He was fumbling for the flashlight with his other hand.

Fran stood quite still. His touch was like fire on her wrist. Fire that went straight to her heart and made it thud wildly. Unconsciously, she swayed toward Derek. The top of her head brushed his chin. Soft strands of hair caressed his cheek.

She heard the swift intake of his breath. Then he caught her close in his arms. He held her for a pulsating, palpitating second. Fran gasped. Like a child, she lifted her lips to his. Derek's mouth closed down swiftly. His kiss was like a brand, binding her to him—forever. Fran hadn't known a kiss could be like that. Bill's kisses stirred her. But never like this. Her lips grew warm. Her breath caught in her throat with a little sobbing sound. Instantly Derek released her.

"I had no right to do that," he said slowly.

Fran couldn't reply. She stood motionless, while her lips kept on thrilling to the magic of a kiss such as she had never known before.

Derek found his flashlight. The round glow showed a jumble of waxen arms and legs and old costumes. Mr. Krause wasn't noted for his neatness. In the center of the mêlée was the mandarin.

He stood, with his arms proudly folded. He was incrusted with dust and cobwebs formed a gray veil over his face; but he was an imposing figure, none the less.

"There!" said Fran huskily. "That's the mandarin."

The mandarin wasn't very big. He reached only to Derek's shoulder. But it was rather difficult to get the figure up the narrow, steep stairs. Derek backed up the stairs, carrying the figure, while Fran held the flashlight. Fran wasn't paying any attention to where she was going, and the first thing she knew, there was a disheartening sound of a rip, and she knew her right stocking had caught on a projecting nail. With difficulty, she bit back the angry ejaculation which welled to her lips.

Once upstairs in the store again, they cleaned off the mandarin and found that the figure was in perfect condition. Derek's delight was boundless.

"Thirteen is my lucky number!" he exulted. "And this makes the thirteenth figure for my collection. I can't help but succeed, with this."

He had evidently forgotten all about the kiss. But Fran hadn't. Her lips kept tingling treacherously.

"You'd better go wash your hands in the back of the shop," Fran said in a matter-of-fact tone.

It was when Derek came back, debonair as ever, that he saw the rip in Fran's stocking. Fran assured him that it didn't matter at all. But Derek was abject. "If you hadn't gone down to get the mandarin for me, this never would have happened! I've got to make it up to you, somehow." His eyes stared at the cobweb-sheer stockings destined for Marie Antoinette.

"The very thing!" he cried. "Marie can get along with her cotton hose. Who cares? But these were intended for you!" He crammed the stockings into Fran's protesting hands.

Bill came into the store just then!

Fran took one look at his gloomy face, and her cheeks flamed red. She put the stockings behind her with a betraying gesture. Bill went on glaring. Fran explained that Derek was a customer. She explained too vehemently, in her agitation. Bill's mouth dragged down farther at the corners, the way it always did when Bill got jealous.

Fran looked appealingly at Derek van Erp.

Derek drew on his gloves. He went to the door and hailed a taxi, motioning for the fellow to come in. "Thank you more than I can say, for the mandarin, Miss Fran," he said gently. Then, with his cane he gestured toward the small, belligerent figure of the Chinese. "Put that in the cab, if you please."

"Gee!" muttered the taximan, but he gingerly approached the mandarin just the same.

"I shall let you know if the mandarin brings me luck," said Derek, going out the door.

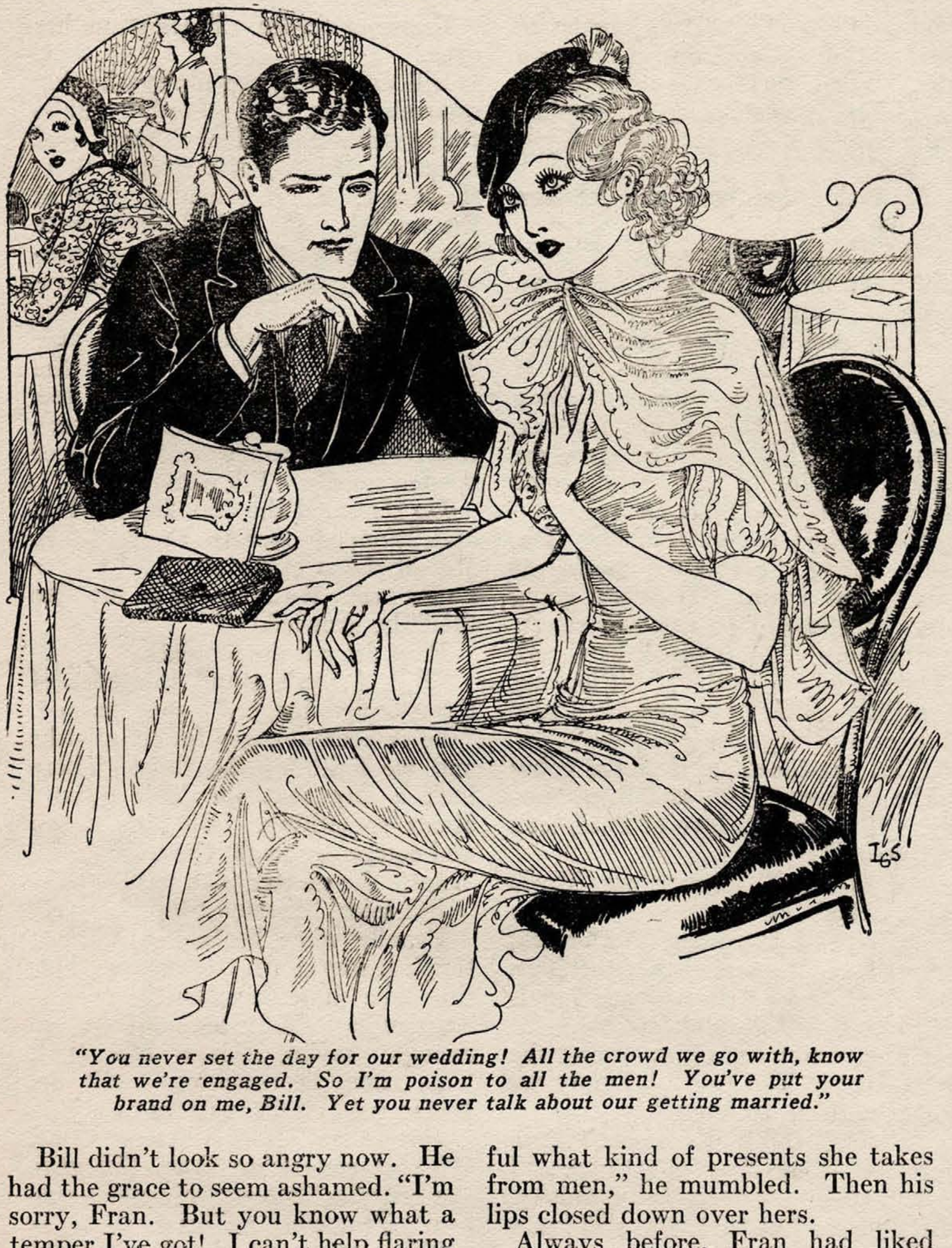
"I shall give myself the pleasure of giving you a punch in the nose!" growled Bill when he was quite sure the taxi was gone. Then he jerked Fran's hands forward and looked at the stockings. Before Fran guessed what he was about, he struck her across the face with the flat of his hand.

"That'll teach you not to be a little flirt and take presents from men like him!"

Fran put her hand to her face. She stared at Bill, who had suddenly become a stranger. A terrifying stranger. "You—you didn't wait for me to explain, did you?" she said very slowly.

"What explanation is there? When a fellow like him gives stockings to a girl like you, there's just one answer!"

Fran's eyes were misted with angry tears. "And just what kind of girl am I, Bill?" she demanded.



"You never set the day for our wedding! All the crowd we go with, know that we're engaged. So I'm poison to all the men! You've put your brand on me, Bill. Yet you never talk about our getting married."

Bill didn't look so angry now. He had the grace to seem ashamed. "I'm sorry, Fran. But you know what a temper I've got! I can't help flaring out sometimes."

Was there a smug hint of satisfaction that his temper was so bad? Fran, listening with ears that criticized, thought there was.

Bill took Fran into his arms. "A girl as pretty as you, has to be careful what kind of presents she takes from men," he mumbled. Then his lips closed down over hers.

Always before, Fran had liked Bill's kisses. She had been afraid when he kissed her. But still she liked being kissed. Now, something had made a difference. Impatiently, she drew away.

"Aw, don't be like that, Fran! I'm sorry. I've begged your pardon.

And you'll admit I had plenty of provocation! Come on. Give us a kiss. Then we'll go out and eat. I've found a swell place where they only charge forty cents for a whole dinner!"

Fran shut her eyes and let him kiss her.

"That's more like my girl!" said Bill when he let her go. "Come on. Let's go. I'm starved."

Fran exhibited the tear in her stocking. "I can't go like this. I got this rip in my stocking, going downstairs for that figure for Mr. van Erp. That's why he gave me this pair. Go out and get me some stockings, Bill, so I can change."

Bill looked uncomfortable. "Oh, come along. Nobody'll notice if you've got a run! We're not going anywhere except to eat, anyway."

Stubbornly, Fran shook her head. "I won't go out in the street looking like this! Either you get me a new pair of stockings, or else——"

"Oh, put those on, if you're going to be so fussy!" Bill exclaimed testily. "But for the love of Pete, let's get going!"

So, after all, Fran wore Marie Antoinette's stockings. When she came out of the little back room, where she had donned the stockings, her cheeks were flying danger signals of red. But Bill didn't notice.

"The restaurant's just around the next corner," he said. "Funny we never noticed it before."

"I don't think it's queer," Fran retorted when they got there. "I won't go in! I hate stuffy, smoky, dirty places like that, and you know it!"

"All right. Buy your own dinner then. If you're too ritzy to come in here with me!"

Deliberately he went into the restaurant, leaving Fran on the pavement outside.

Fran bit her lip. Tears stung her eyes.

Bill and she were always having quarrels like this. Sordid affairs that made her feel cheap and ashamed. Slowly she walked along the street. There was a tea shop at the corner. A quiet place with black-painted tables and orange candles that gave a romantic atmosphere.

Fran went in and sat at a table near the door. She stared at the menu with eyes that did not see. The waitress did not come for some time. While Fran waited, the door opened noisily. Bill came in.

He slammed the door behind him and stamped over to Fran's table. He sat down opposite her. "You're a nice one! Walking out on me, like this!" he growled.

Fran drew a deep breath.

"Bill, I can't stand this sort of thing any longer," she gasped. "We've been engaged for six months and we fight all the time! There isn't a day that we don't quarrel about something. Bill, it's cheap and common to fight the way we do. What's the matter with us?"

Bill said: "Honey, I love you so!"

Usually when he said that, Fran thrilled, way down to her toes. This time, she shook her head.

"You've shut me up, often enough, saying things like that. This time, love-making won't do. We've got to talk matters over."

Just then, the waitress came. Without consulting Fran, Bill gave the order. That was his usual custom. Fran paid no heed.

"You never set the day for our wedding!" she persisted. "I'm engaged to you. All the crowd we go with, know that. So I'm poison to all the men! You've put your brand on me, Bill. Yet you never talk about our getting married!"

His eyes smoldered. "So that's it! You're sore because folks know you're engaged to me, so you can't flirt. Well, I'd call that pretty low, if you ask me."

Fran shook her head. "You don't understand, Bill. If you and I got along all right, I'd stay engaged to you forever, and not even want to look at another man. But we fight! And"—she hesitated, summoning her courage—"I'm not sure, but I don't think I love you any more, Bill. Maybe I did love you once. But now——" Her voice died away, before the fury in his face.

"So that's it, is it? Giving me the run-around, because a swell pays you a little attention? Don't you know that his sort considers you on a par with a doormat? Something to wipe his feet on!"

"That isn't so!" Fran said in a choked voice.

"Oh! Then you do like him! So that *is* it! All right. Take him then. I'm through."

The food came and they ate. At least Fran supposed she ate. There was a big lump in her thoat and her heart felt frozen.

"Sorry I can't give you back your engagement ring," she jerked out. "But since you never gave me one, I can't, very well!"

"How could I give you a ring? I'm not a millionaire like your precious Van Erp!"

"He's no millionaire, either! He's broke. Poorer than you or me. But he's not whining. Not much. He's going to run a side show at Coney Island. That's the kind of fellow he is!"

The minute Fran had spoken, she would have given anything to call back the sentences. But it was too late.

Bill's eyes looked intent. Interested. "So! He's going to run a side show is he? A wax works, I suppose, or he wouldn't have been hanging around the store."

"I don't know what sort of a show," lied Fran. But it was too late.

"I wonder what Sam Krause would say if he knew you were getting so thick with this Van Erp and turning down his own nephew! Or maybe you've forgotten that it was Sam Krause that introduced you and me? My uncle, Sam Krause!" He looked at her intently.

Fran had a scared feeling that seemed to be all over her body. "I suppose you mean my job?" she whispered slowly.

"Just that." Bill leaned across the table. "Don't be a little fool, Fran!"

Fran laid down her fork. "Funny!" she laughed jerkily. "It's taken a lot for me to see what you really are, Bill Krause! An awful lot! All week I've known that you were meeting Sadie Small on the quiet while I waited for you. But I wouldn't let myself know that. Because I didn't want to. I thought I loved you, you see? To-night, for the first time in my life, I see you as you really are. Common, jealous, cheap, two-timing, stingy, low! So we're through, Bill. Through for good. And if you want to take my job away, go ahead. I'll get another."

Blindly, Fran went to the door and tugged it open. Blindly, she hurried along the street. She walked until she was weary. Then she saw a subway kiosk. She dived down the stairs and fumbled in her purse for a nickel. Once inside the turnstile, she took the train bound for Coney Island.

All the long, jolting way out there, she thought about Bill. A curtain of tears was on her lashes. She was weeping for the love that had never really existed.

It took quite a while to find the tiny place labeled: "The Wax Works of History." A man was feebly speiling outside in a lackadaisical manner. No one was near. Fran tendered her dime to him and went inside.

Derek van Erp was sitting on a box, his face buried in his hands. At her step, he jumped up. "Oh," he said. "You!" His face was alight with pleasure.

Shyly, Fran said: "I thought I'd come out and see how the mandarin stood the trip."

Derek smiled. "He's the best exhibit I have. Miss Fran, I'm beginning to think that a man has to be born to this side-show business. I don't seem to have quite the hang of it, yet. You see, not a soul has come in, since we opened!"

"I came in!" said Fran.

There was a queer little electric silence. "Yes. You came!" repeated Derek. "That's the very nicest thing that's happened to me since—everything went to smash."

"Do you really feel like that?" asked Fran. She was gripping one hand with the other, tightly. "I'm glad. Because I've come out to—to take a job with you!"

"A job!" gasped Derek. "But—but I haven't any money. I can't pay you enough."

"I have some money saved up," said Fran stoutly.

She looked around.

The long, narrow room was partitioned off into twelve compartments. In the twelve spaces were set wax figures, faintly reminiscent of a fancy-dress ball. Cæsar, wearing a toga. Morgan, in a pirate's doublet and hose. Cleopatra, reclining on a divan. Daniel in the lions' den. George Washington, about to chop down a cherry tree. William Tell, with an apple in his hand. Florence Nightingale in a nurse's garb. Marie Antoinette, coquettishly displaying her cotton stockings. Abraham Lincoln, Pocahontas, King George, President McKinley, and the mandarin.

"They look quite all right, don't they?" Derek asked, following the line of her gaze. His tone was anxious.

"They—they're hopeless!" Fran exclaimed. "Absolutely hopeless. Of course no one would come in here. Not a chance. People only come to a wax works to get the blue jimmies!"

"Blue jimmies?"

"Yes. Nightmares! Horrors! They want to see blood all over everything! Famous characters who have murdered folks with axes and things!" Fran was almost tearful.

"George Washington murdered a cherry tree with a hatchet." Derek's smile was wry. "Wouldn't that do?"

Fran struck her hands together lightly. "I've an idea! Derek, we're going to make a success of this thing!" She was so excited she didn't notice she had called him by his first name.

"We'll call this place 'The Chamber of Horrors!' And when people get inside, they'll shudder with terror! Go out and rustle up a couple of cans of good bright-red paint! After that, get me a needle and thread, and a pair of scissors. And tell that half-dead individual out there to stop barking. He's through for the night!"

Then, as Derek blinked in surprise: "Hurry! We have so little time."

Fran awoke the next morning to a feeling of pleasant anticipation.

She lay in bed, too lazily content to move. Presently, the unfamiliarity of her surroundings shocked her into complete wakefulness.

She was in a tiny room, Spartan-like in its severity. She lay on a hard cot, scrupulously clean. Near her was a kitchen chair. A mirror was tacked to the wall. Beneath, was a shelf with a basin containing water.

Fran sat up with a jerk, clasping her knees with her interlaced fingers. What under heaven had happened to her own room?

Some one knocked at the door. A masculine voice called, "Fran! Do hurry and dress. I'm afraid to stay alone any longer with these horrors. They make my blood run cold!"

Then Fran remembered. She laughed aloud. "Coming!" she cried.

It had been a task, transforming Derek's stiff galaxy of figures into a chamber of horrors. She and Derek had worked till three o'clock in the morning. Time raced by.

Fran hurried into her clothes, washing in the small tin basin. Combing the tangles out of her hair with her pocket comb.

Derek had wanted to taxi her home at three in the morning! She wouldn't hear of that, and Derek wouldn't let her go home alone. There was a deadlock. Finally, Derek suggested diffidently that she could stay in the back room of the museum while he bunked with the Living Skeleton in the Freak Museum next door.

Gladly, Fran consented. So weary was she, that she fairly fell into bed. But she couldn't sleep for a while. She kept thinking about two men. Bill and Derek. Derek and Bill. When she finally slept, she dreamed of the two.

"Good morning!" she said shyly, coming into the museum. Somehow she hadn't remembered how tall and good-looking Derek was.

He bent and took both her hands in his. "I never can thank you enough for taking my dead wax works and turning the place into a shambles!" His mouth laughed, but his eyes were very earnest.

Fran blushed.

"But of course I can't let you quit your job and come out to work for me. That would be an imposition on my part. Besides, there's that boy friend of yours."

Fran said quickly: "Things do look grand, don't they?"

She walked around, examining the different exhibits. President McKinley was now a bartender in a saloon scene. They had put an apron around his middle, clad him in a workingman's shirt, and smudged his face with charcoal. Cæsar, dressed in modern attire, was a gunman, with a revolver in his hand, menacing Florence Nightingale, now an entertainer in the place.

Next to this was a Chinese scene. The mandarin pointed a long finger nail at an unfortunate coolie whose head was on the block. Over him bent a bloodthirsty figure with a hatchet in his upraised hand. They had turned the executioner's face away, lest his resemblance to one George Washington be too marked! In Derek's room lay the powdered wig and the blue satin suit previously worn by the figure.

Marie Antoinette was walking through streets running with blood. Daniel was having a gory time in the lions' den.

That was as far as Fran got, in her examination of the museum.

Derek stepped in front of her. He tilted her chin with his forefinger and looked deep into her eyes. "I want to tell you something," he said. "You're the grandest girl I've ever known—and the most beautiful!" They stood quite still, gazing at each other. Fran felt a tingling of her spine. She trembled.

Suddenly, the moment was gone. "Come on, let's eat!" said Derek briskly.

Over their bacon and eggs, Derek said something else that Fran was to remember always. "Funny how some people are friends, the minute you first meet them! It was like that with me. When I first saw you."

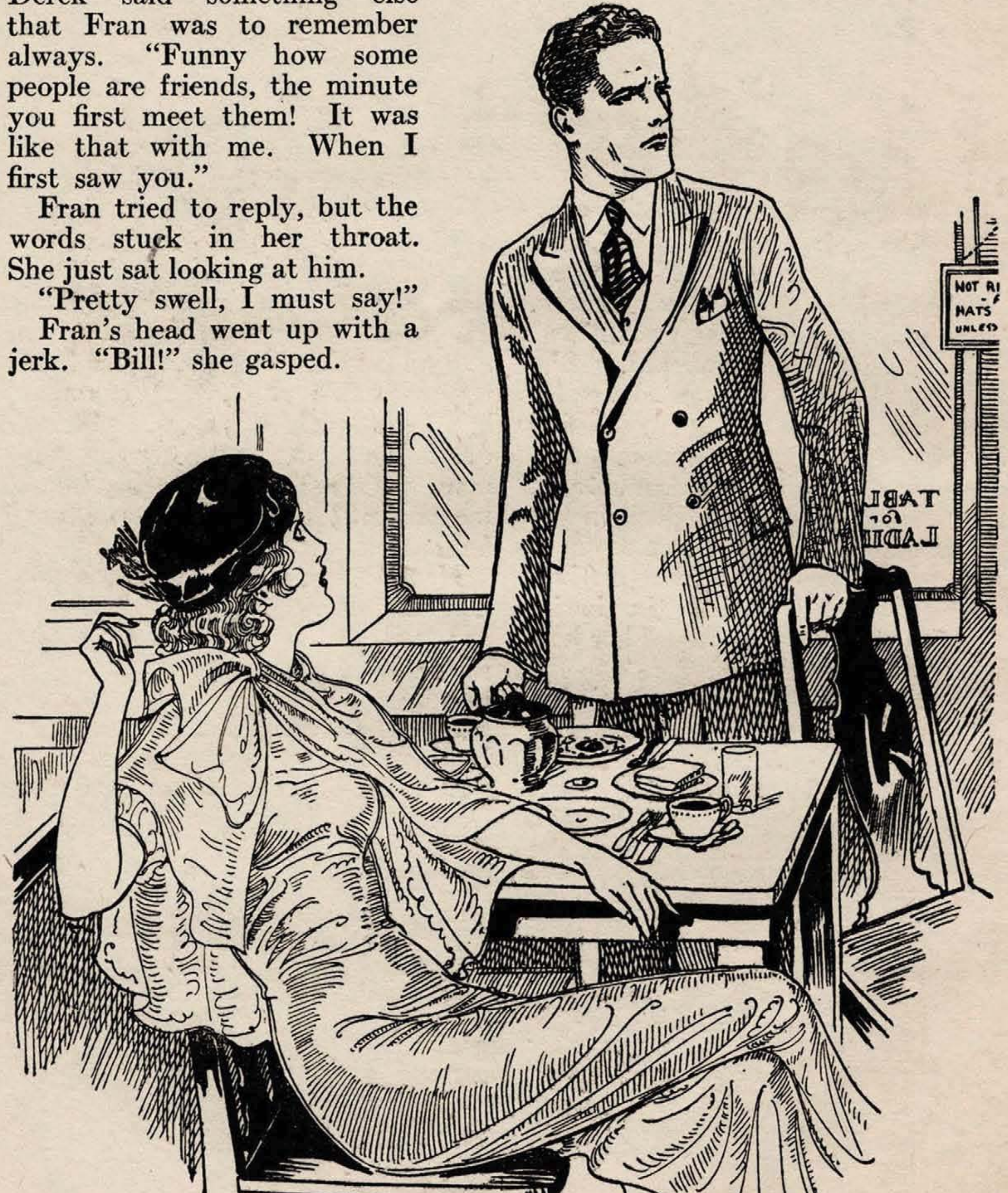
Fran tried to reply, but the words stuck in her throat. She just sat looking at him.

"Pretty swell, I must say!"

Fran's head went up with a jerk. "Bill!" she gasped.

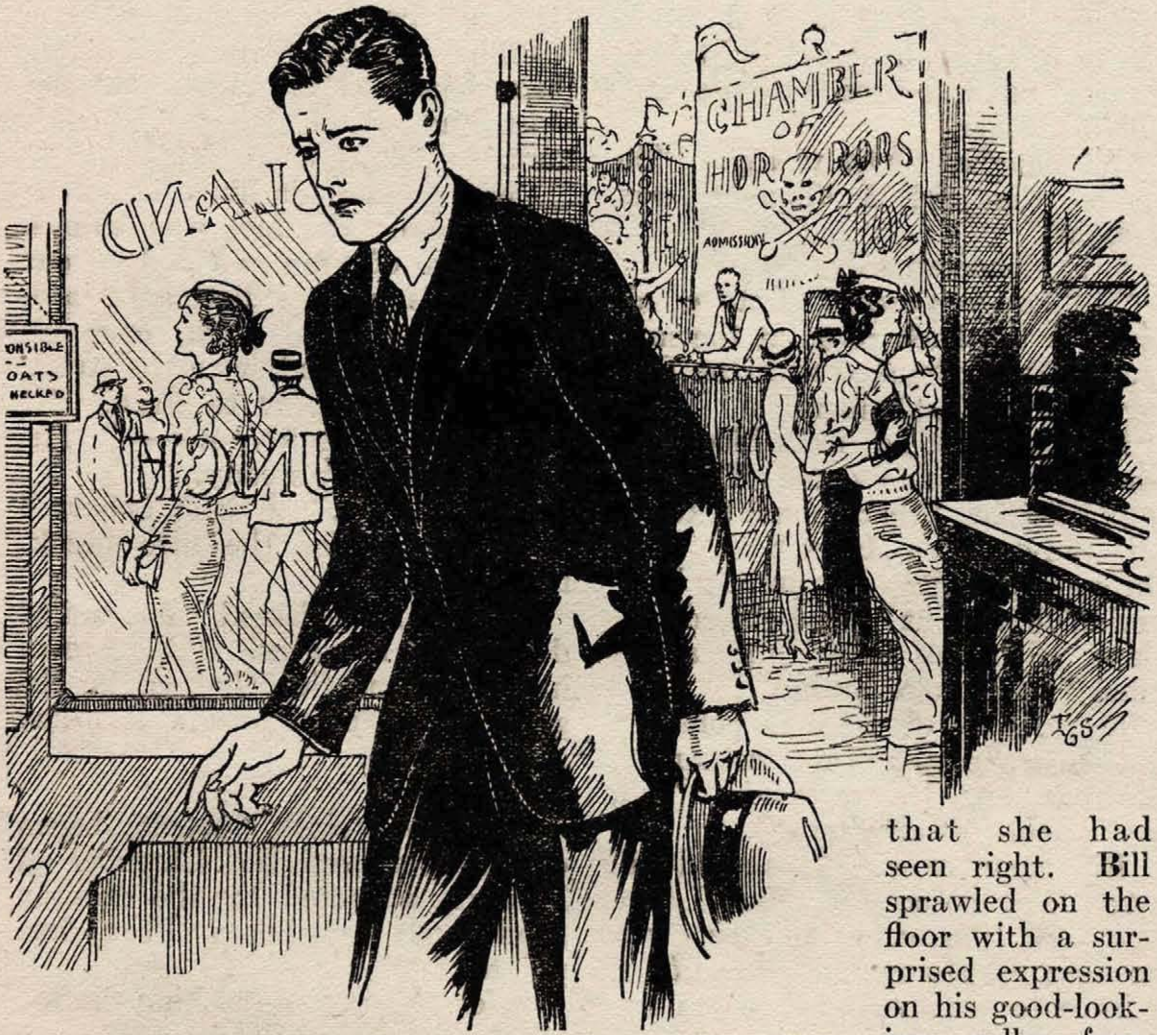
Bill Krause was standing next to the little white-topped table. So engrossed were they, that neither she nor Derek had noticed Bill as he came into the restaurant.

Bill's face was horrible. He looked as if he hadn't slept. His



eyes glowered hatefully, and his mouth was a thin, white line.

"So! You spent the night with this side-show punk, did you? After all your touch-me-not ways with me!" He hurled the words at Fran like so many handfuls of mud.



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"Bill!" gasped Fran. She felt faint and sick.

Derek's eyes narrowed. He got up leisurely. "One more word and I'll knock you down," he said slowly.

Bill took a step backward. "You can't shut me up! I followed Fran out here last night. I watched outside the place. Neither of you came out! And here you are, having breakfast together. What more proof do you want?"

Derek moved so swiftly that afterward, Fran couldn't believe that she had seen right. Bill sprawled on the floor with a surprised expression on his good-looking, sulky face. Derek looked at the knuckles of his right hand.

"You'd better apologize to Miss Fran for this brawl!" he said quietly.

Fran's eyes were glazed with tears. "Please go, Derek." She touched his sleeve with her finger tips. "Let me talk to him alone."

"But——" began Derek, gazing down at Bill.

"Please!" she repeated tremulously.

"I'll be right outside!" said Derek grimly. "Call if you want me!" He paid the check for the breakfast and stalked out. He walked up and down, like a sentry, outside the window.

Fran noticed that Bill took plenty of time about getting to his feet. Derek was outside by the time Bill faced her.

Bill laughed hysterically. "So you're the girl I thought was straight!"

Fran sighed wearily.

"Bill, are you crazy? I stayed all night in the back room at the museum. Derek bunked with the Living Skeleton, next door."

Bill glared at her from bloodshot eyes. "That's a new one! The Living Skeleton! What do you take me for, anyhow? Haven't I been through enough? I tramped back and forth in front of that cursed side show all night long. I'm about crazy!" His voice broke.

Fran looked at the man polishing glasses in the back of the restaurant. No one else was around. "Bill, you've got this all wrong!"

Bill came close. "I should kill you! You deserve it! But I love you. So I'm going to keep you straight for the rest of your life, if I have to keep you shut up in one room! We're getting married, you and me. Right now!"

"So, at last you've said what I've been waiting to hear! For six months I've waited. Now when you do speak, it's too late." Fran's face was very grave. "Bill, I meant what I told you, last night. You and I are through!"

"Will *he* marry you?" Bill's eyes glared into hers.

"It isn't a question of marrying. I——"

"I thought so! Well, you'd better do some tall thinking. You're out of a job. My uncle won't let you come back. No recommendation, either!" Bill's tone gloated. "So you'd better take me up on my offer, pretty darned quick."

"Go away!" said Fran slowly. "Before I begin to loathe you!"

Bill's breath came whistling through set teeth. He caught her wrists and twisted them. His hands hurt.

Derek came dashing into the lunch room. His face was furious. Bill let go of Fran and dodged out of Derek's way. "Better be sensible!" he advised Fran, over his shoulder, as he fled down the street.

Derek came over to Fran. "If that beast had hurt you——" His voice wasn't very steady.

Fran gasped: "I don't believe I thanked you for the nice breakfast!"

Derek's face cleared. He smiled down into her eyes. "Did I ever happen to mention that you're the grandest girl in the world?" he asked softly.

At two o'clock, people began crowding around the Chamber of Horrors, attracted by the crimson skull and crossbones Fran had painted.

"Here!" said Fran, taking the roll of tickets from Derek. "I'll sell these, while you tell people about things inside the museum."

"Oh, I couldn't let you do that, Fran! You've done so much already. I——"

"Here's my dime, and I'd like to go into this-here place. If you two could decide which one of you is going to sell tickets!" broke in a woman's harsh voice.

Fran pulled a ticket from the roll and pocketed the dime. She smiled at Derek. "Go along!" she whispered.

He patted her sleeve. "I'll get even later!" he promised. Then he disappeared into the museum.

All afternoon, people straggled into the Chamber of Horrors. But they didn't seem to be much impressed. When they came out, they announced loudly that the show was no good. Fran's heart contracted with fear. What if the museum failed after all! What would Derek do then? Her hands went clammy cold.

About four o'clock, business picked up. Crowds flocked in. They came out chattering interestedly. Fran strained her ears to listen. "Do you think King Louis is real? I don't. He's just another wax figure. But if you ask me, I'd say he's cleverly made!"

King Louis! But they had no figure of King Louis.

There was no time to think about the matter. People were arriving too fast. Fran made change with flying fingers. By five thirty the cash box was full!

"This is the zero hour, miss," said Pete. He was the new man they hired to ballyhoo. "Might as well shut up shop for an hour."

Fran nodded. Wearily, she slipped down from the high booth.

"Where's the boss?" went on Pete. "He hasn't as much as stuck his nose outside the pitch, all afternoon."

"I don't know," said Fran. She was suddenly worried. Hastily she went into the museum.

At her entrance, a weary figure in a blue satin suit and wearing a white periwig, got hastily in position on his knees in front of Marie Antoinette.

Marie Antoinette was coquettishly lifting one corner of her skirt to display her shapely ankle, just as Fran had arranged. But Fran hadn't painted the sign which hung above her.

Is King Louis Real? Five Dollars to Any One Who Can Make Any of Our Wax Figures Smile!

"Derek!" gasped Fran.

King Louis scrambled to his feet, flexing his weary arms and legs as he did so. "I should have taken an easier position. To-night I think I'll just try standing in front of Marie!"

"But Derek!" Fran was staring at his face, thickly incrusted with wax and paint. "I don't understand!"

"I wasn't sure it would work. That's why I didn't tell you, before." Derek stretched again. "George Washington's suit fits me beautifully, doesn't it?" he went on, as she still stared uncomprehendingly. "I did this mechanical-man stunt at all the college powwows. It always brought down the house. And people this afternoon fell for it like nobody's business! They tried so hard to make me laugh, that they put themselves into good humor. I'll bet they bring all their friends and come back to-night. And the best thing of all: nobody could possibly recognize me under all this wax and paint!"

"Derek, nothing on earth is going to keep you from succeeding!" Her eyes were luminous with unshed tears.

Derek shook his head. "Not since I have to live up to you, dear! I sort of bucked at making a fool of myself in front of all these strangers. It was different from making a little sport for my college pals. And then I thought of you, out there selling tickets. I remembered that you had given up your good job and thrown in your lot with my uncertain fortunes. That decided me."

Fran's lips trembled. He had called her "dear!"

"I got fired!" she said slowly. "So this is really charity. Giving me a job, you see. I need a job."

"And I need you," Derek murmured in an odd tone.

As Fran sold tickets and made change that night, she thought about Derek and what he had said.

She was in love with him! The knowledge came to her with the force of a blow. In love with Derek van Erp—and she had never guessed. That was why she had at last realized that the thrill she felt over Bill's dangerous kisses, wasn't really love. This new tide of feeling which swept over her was quite different. It was something so wonderful that it took her breath away.

"Hello, Fran!"

Fran's thoughts stopped short. "Bill!" she gasped. With Bill was a big burly policeman. Fran's heart came up in her throat and stayed there.

"Pete!" she said in an urgent undertone. "Take the ticket booth for a minute. Will you?"

Pete climbed to the booth as she slipped down. She drew Bill a little distance from the museum. "Now," she gasped. "What do you want?"

"We want your Mr. van Erp!" Bill was smiling nastily.

Fran caught her breath. "Don't say his name so loud! He calls himself Mr. Smith out here!"

Blandly, the officer said: "Whatever he calls himself, 'tis no concern of ours. But I have a warrant for the arrest of the person who stole a wax figure out of Mr. Sam Krause's storeroom."

"Oh!" Everything reeled dizzily about Fran. She clutched at the officer's arm. "But you can't do that! The mandarin was an old figure that just took up space. Mr. Krause offered it to anybody who would carry it away. There was no question of stealing!"

"Mr. Krause seems to think differently," put in Bill importantly.

Fran turned on Bill like a whirlwind. "So! This is the way you get even, is it? A low-down contemptible way. You know darned well that Mr. Krause wanted to get rid of that figure!"

Bill smiled nastily.

Fran went on in a breathless tone: "All right. Have it your way, if you want to! But I was the one who took that wax figure from Mr. Krause's storeroom. Serve your old John Doe warrant on me! Let's have this over with!"

Bill stopped smiling and looked annoyed. "Mr. van Erp is the thief!" he snapped.

"I was the one who took the figure!" repeated Fran doggedly.

Bill said a few words to the policeman in an undertone. The officer moved over to the corner and stood there. Bill pulled Fran into a secluded corner. His mouth met Fran's in a kiss that was degrading and frightening. Finally he stopped kissing her.

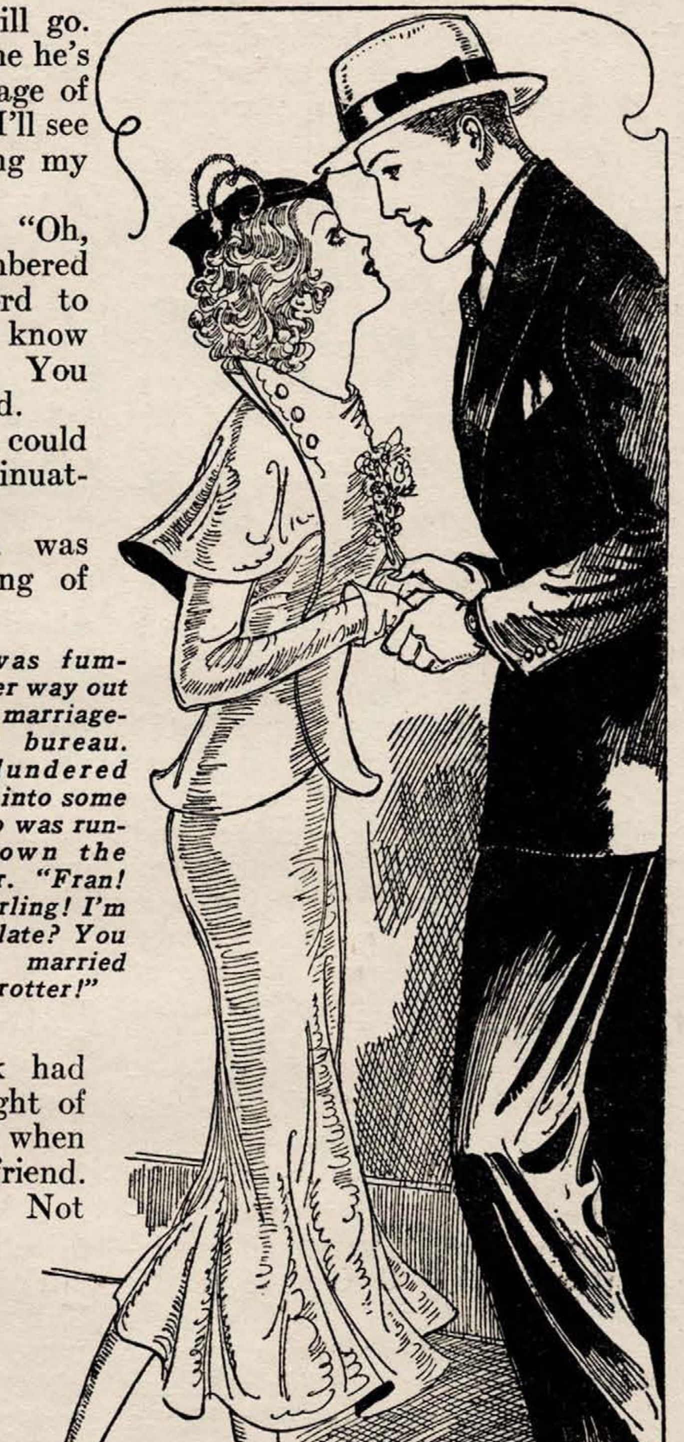
"You've got into my blood!" he cried hoarsely. "I didn't know how crazy I was about you, till I found out you'd fallen for this high-hat chap. But you'll never get him. See? Not if I have to kill both of you to keep you apart!"

Fran struggled to free herself from his hateful embrace. His arms were like bands of steel about her.

"I can have him put in jail for the theft of the mandarin. It won't do any good for you to say you took the figure. I'll swear I saw him taking it from my uncle's shop!"

Fran gave a pitiful little groan.

"Besides, I know this fellow's real



Fran was fumbling her way out of the marriage-license bureau. She blundered blindly into some one who was running down the corridor. "Fran! Fran darling! I'm not too late? You haven't married that rotter!"

name. No Smith business will go. So I'll smear the Van Erp name he's so proud of, over the front page of every dirty newsrag in town. I'll see that he pays plenty for taking my girl!"

Fran clasped her hands. "Oh, no!" she gasped. She remembered how she had given her word to Derek that no one should ever know his real identity. "No. You mustn't do that!" she repeated.

"There might be a way this could be fixed." Bill's voice was insinuating.

"What?" Instantly Fran was tense. She had a foreboding of something evil.

"If you married me, I'd pledge you my word that I'd forget all this! Van Erp can hide down here in a moth-eaten museum till he dies, for all I care."

Fran swayed. Her knees seemed to buckle under her. She remembered how Derek had called her "dear!" She thought of the expression in Derek's eyes when he had told her she was his friend. She couldn't let Derek down. Not ever. No price was too high to pay.

"All right. If you'll promise faithfully that Derek goes free!" Fran felt sick and worn out.

Bill's lips lingered on hers hatefully. Then he let her go.

Fran stood quite still, running the back of her hand across her lips as if to wipe off his kiss.

Meanwhile, Bill had gone to summon the police officer. "Sorry!" he said importantly to the policeman. "The whole affair was a mistake.

Just an error. Too bad I dragged you clear out here for nothing."

Fran was shivering. Her head ached horribly.

The price of Derek's pride was marrying Bill! She laughed hysterically.

Yesterday, she might have thought that being married to Bill was the grandest thing in the world. To-day, she knew better. She saw Bill with true eyes, and what she saw, made her shudder.

"Let's hurry!" she gasped, beginning to walk toward the subway. She must get away before Derek missed her.

"Don't you want to get your hat?" Bill's voice seemed to come from a long way off.

"What do I care about a hat?" Fran was tramping resolutely along.

The ride into town was seemingly endless. Bill's hands were hot and possessive on her arm. Bill talked a great deal. Fran crouched against the seat. She felt numb and queer.

"I'll be by to-morrow morning at nine," Bill said, when he left her at the door of her boarding house. "But let me tell you: If you try to communicate with this Van Erp fellow, everything'll be all off. And he'll go to jail! Don't forget that. And remember: I'm being pretty forgiving. Not every man would condescend to marry you, after what's happened!"

When Fran was alone in her room, she brushed her lips with her spread fingers, whimpering like a child who has been hurt.

Married. Married to Bill! Oh, she couldn't!

She threw herself face downward on the bed, and wept. Finally, exhausted, she fell asleep.

It was eight o'clock when she woke, stiff and unrefreshed from sleeping in her clothes. Numbly, she undressed and bathed. She couldn't think. Couldn't plan. Her mind seemed to have stopped.

Slowly she put on her prettiest dress and her best slippers. With shaking hands, she rouged her pallid cheeks.

Some one knocked at the door. Fran's hand flew to her heart. Had Bill come already? Surely it wasn't time!

"Coming!" she said in an odd little scared voice. She pulled her hat over her curls. Her feet stumbled as she went to the door.

Bill kissed her till she went limp in his arms. Everything in the room whirled about crazily, while Fran fought to keep from screaming.

"White!" he said in a satisfied tone. "I'm sure glad you're wearing white. A regular bride!"

Fran whispered: "I don't love you. You know that. Yet—yet you insist on this farce of a wedding?"

Bill's eyes darkened angrily. "Stop that sort of talk!" he commanded. "You're going to be my wife. And my wife is going to do as she's told!"

The marriage-license bureau was filled with people. Tremblingly, Fran followed Bill into the room. She felt as if she were Marie Antoinette on the way to the guillotine.

Fran looked at the people dazedly. Tall women seemed to marry little men, and big men selected little girls. Old and young. Homely and pretty. Fran bit her lips, and sank down onto the nearest chair.

"You'll have to wait!" cackled the old man who was with a young, giggling girl. "Looks like people is still gettin' married, despite what the books and newspapers say!"

Fran felt as if there wasn't enough air in the room to breathe. She twisted her fingers together. She fought with all her will to keep from fainting.

Derek! She must remember that she was doing this for Derek!

"Like to take a look at the morning paper?" cackled the talkative old bridegroom-elect.

Limply, Fran accepted the crumpled sheet. She held the newspaper for a time, not even looking at it. She was horribly aware of Bill's shoulder against hers. Suddenly she felt Bill stiffen. He made a lunge for the newspaper, but he was too late. Fran's eyes had caught a glimpse of the front page.

"Oh!" she gasped.

She snatched the paper away from Bill's clutching hand.

On the front page was a picture. Derek, in his King Louis costume! "Scion of Wealthy House Jailed," was the heading. Under the picture of an interior shot of the museum, was the text: "Derek van Erp Steals Wax Figure." Beside that was an old snapshot of Derek in his polo costume.

Fran's eyes blurred with fury.

"So! You sold Derek out anyway! After you'd promised!"

"You're the next couple!" cackled the old fellow, coming back with his license in his hand.

"Fran, I can explain!" Bill was licking his dry lips.

"So can I!" Fran's hand shot out and she slapped Bill resoundingly across the face!

A startled gasp went over the room.

Fran didn't notice. She was fumbling her way out of the place. She was crying horribly. She blundered blindly into some one who was running pell-mell down the corridor.

"Fran! Fran darling!" Loving arms closed about her. "Fran, I'm not too late? You haven't married that rotter!"

Fran blinked back her tears. "Derek!" She whispered his name. She clung to him. "Oh, Derek, I didn't tell about you. I would have died, rather than have anybody find out. I was going to marry Bill to keep him from telling. I——"

"So that was it!" Derek's voice was grim. "Darling, I've been tracing——"

"No loitering in the halls, if you please!" said a harsh, official voice.

Hastily, Derek released Fran.

"Come on, dear," he said. "I've a cab waiting outside."

"Can—can we afford a taxi?" Fran asked doubtfully, as she got in.

"Oh, my sweet!" He drew her close. He laid his face against hers. "I've been tracing you, ever since I got out of jail, early this morning. My uncle Laurence's lawyer got me out, the first thing. I paid forty dollars for the dog-goned mandarin. That got me free."

"Oh!" sobbed Fran. "All your money! And it was my fault for giving the figure to you. I thought I was helping and——"

"Where do you want to go? If anywhere?" asked the taxi driver in a disagreeable tone.

"Drive around. Central Park. Anywhere!" Derek was kissing Fran tumultuously.

"You were helping me, darling!" he assured her fatuously. "Uncle Laurence thought I was all Van Erp. He's my mother's brother, you see. And he disliked the girl I was going to marry. And he thought I was the sort of man who would sink under adverse conditions. And when he saw that article in the newspaper he was delighted! He came and looked me up, right away. Dear, he's giving me a job in his office. A real job, with lots of money. There's only one condition. I have to keep the wax-works museum, and

Saturdays he wants me to be King Louis again! He's afraid I'll get high-hat or something, I guess." Derek's voice was lilting with happiness.

"Oh!" said Fran. She drew away slightly. "So you're going back to being the sort of man that's a million miles above me!" she said. "I—I'm glad for you, Derek. Awfully glad. Only——" Her voice broke.

"Only you're going to hate being married to a mere business man?" Derek's lips lingered on hers. "Is that what you're trying to tell me?"

"Married?" quavered Fran.

"I couldn't tell you how much I loved you. I couldn't ask you to be my wife, not when I didn't have a penny to my name. But now I'm a plutocrat—— Oh, Fran darling, you've got to marry me. I love you so. I want you so. I need you so!" he finished in a low voice.

Fran's lips quivered against his. "Of course I'll marry you!" she sobbed. "I've adored you, since the very first minute you came into the store."

Derek chuckled. "I'll bet that newspaper article will bring a lot of trade to the museum! Too bad we won't be there to see! I've left Pete in charge." He tilted Fran's chin with his forefinger. "Powder your pretty little nose, sweet! Uncle Laurence is waiting for us to have luncheon with him at the Ritz. Then we can go and get married. How would that program suit you?"

"Anything!" Fran exclaimed. "So long as we're together!"

Derek van Erp found that such a satisfactory answer that he almost forgot to give her the box he had in his coat pocket.

"Six pairs of cobweb stockings, darling!" he said gleefully. "Bought with an advance on my salary! These stockings are your own, sweet. They don't belong to Marie Antoinette!"

"I adore you!" repeated Fran.

Their lips met in a long, long kiss.

* * *

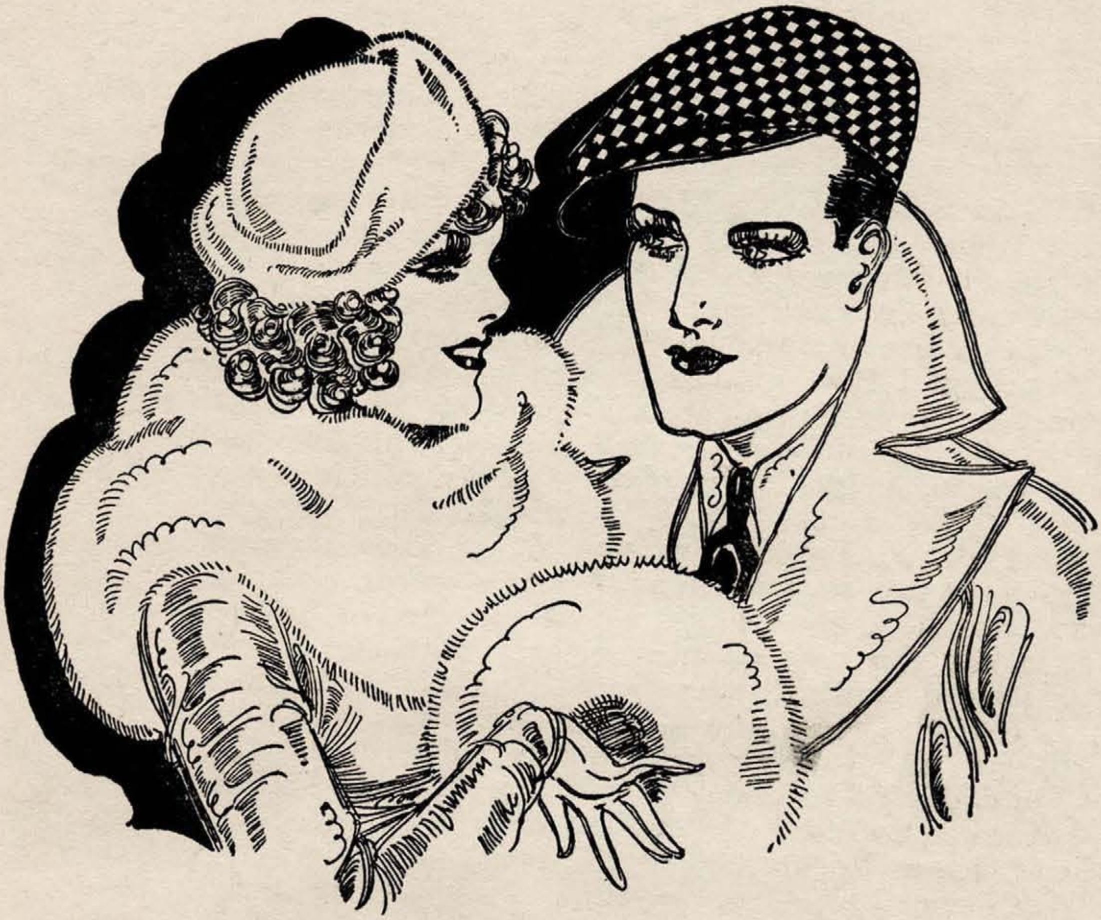
LOVE'S SURETY

MOONLIGHT and a midsummer night,
And a garden full of flowers,
All filled with the mystic light
Found only in love's bowers.

Crickets and katydids chirping love
From every flower's chalice,
For it makes for them a leaf above
And a bloom below, a palace.

My lips against your throat so white,
Your arms around me pressing,
Give promise of a love whose might
Does not keep me guessing.

Emma Upton Vaughn.



Going Primitive / By Marie Hoyt

THE doorbell rang and Delphine Parker's movements suddenly became feverish. She grabbed for her purse and hat, took one last look in the mirror, patted her hair expertly, added just a bit more rouge, and then, satisfied, snapped out the light. She doubted if she had ever looked better. Well, that was as it should be. She'd probably never have another chance like this one.

She walked into the living room and at once the excited light in her eyes faded. Her face became absolutely expressionless.

"Oh, it's you, Tommy," she said slowly. "I thought you were still at school."

"Came home for the holiday, Dell. I thought maybe you'd be surprised to see me, but I didn't expect this tumultuous welcome. I mean, you could have controlled yourself a little better. Not shown such wild joy. Maybe even refrained from leaping forward into my arms like this."

"Well"—defensively—"you could not expect me to have the band out, when you didn't even tell me you were coming. If you'd told me, I could have saved the evening for you. As it is, I've got a date."

"I gather as much from your opening remark. Somebody I know?"

"Martin French."

Tommy whistled softly.

"Not *the* Martin French, of the rotogravure sections, and the wads of dough?"

"Oh, don't be nasty. Martin French is nice."

"I wasn't being nasty. Where did you meet the gentleman?"

"He sits at one of my tables."

"I suppose I'll be wasting my breath if I tell you his reputation is slightly n. g. You'll consider that I'm butting in, or that I'm just plain jealous."

"Don't be silly. Nobody pays any attention to a man's reputation nowadays."

Tommy's voice lost its bantering note. Delphine suddenly knew that he was in dead earnest.

"And it won't do me any good to ask you not to go with him?"

"No, it won't. Who gave you the right to pick my friends, anyway?"

"Well"—quizzically—"I love you, Dell. And I've asked you to marry me. Doesn't that even give me the right to ask a favor?"

"And I've refused to marry you, and I've told you I didn't love you. You're no more to me than—than the postman." Her anger went as suddenly as it had come. "Oh, Tommy, I didn't mean that. Not just that way. You and I have always been friends, and I hope we always will be friends. But——"

"But my ideas are old-fashioned, and the place I live in is a small town, and I'm still a college boy—no money, just prospects."

"Please don't make it sound worse than it is, Tommy."

The doorbell rang again. Tommy picked up his hat with a wry smile.

"Maybe if I go out now," he said, "they'll be taking a picture of him for the papers, and I'll get in it."

Having the two men meet in the hall, and having to introduce them, made Dell ill-at-ease. But Tommy did not linger, and in a few minutes Dell and Martin French were driving off in the big imported roadster. She put Tommy resolutely out of her mind. This man was everything Tommy was not. This man could give his wife anything she wanted, no matter how expensive it might be. Dell knew she had to make the most of this night with him if she wanted him. And she did want him.

When modern girls wanted a man, they did not sit back and wait for him to choose them. They followed out some definite plan to gain his favor. And in that one respect, they were apt to be as successful as the Royal Northwest Mounted.

Martin French's age was indeterminate due to the meticulous care he took of his face and skin, the massages, exercises, and the other youth-saving devices which only the very rich have time for and can afford.

They had gone only a short distance before Martin turned off the main highway, and entered the yard of a small country school. The high snowbanks on each side of the highway effectively hid the yard from any passer-by, yet the yard itself was packed firm by many small feet, so that there was not the slightest danger of the car getting stuck.

This move on Martin's part, took Dell by surprise. Yet he reassured her by sinking back in his seat, offering her a cigarette, and lighting one for himself.

"Hope you don't mind," he said in that lazy, exciting voice of his. "Driving between high piles of snow isn't much fun. I don't like to drive anyway. Not when there's somebody like you to talk to. You know, I've got a lot to find out about you. I don't know a thing except what my eyes and my heart tell me."

"And what's that?" Dell smiled.

"My eyes tell me you're the most beautiful girl I've ever seen, the most fascinating I've ever met. And my heart tells me that I'm beginning, for the first time in my life, to believe in love at first sight."

That so astonished Dell, she could think of nothing to say in reply. After a moment he went on.

"You know, Dell," he said, "I wish you knew me better. I wish you knew me well enough to realize what that means coming from this confirmed old bachelor. You've done something to me, all right. And to think that when I first saw you I thought you were just another pretty girl. I didn't realize that you were dangerous."

Dell listened incredulously, skeptically, yet there was a ring of sincerity in his voice which forced her to believe him. Then, almost as if he could read her mind, he laughed softly.

"I've got to stop talking like this," he told her. "You'll think I'm either crazy or have the world's best line. Even if it *is* the truth, I know how it must sound. I swear it's the first time it's ever happened to me. I'm just as astonished as you are."

Abruptly he changed the subject without waiting for her to speak. He drew Dell out about herself, and he talked about himself. He was a fascinating talker, and Dell listened enthralled.

After a long time, he mentioned again his having fallen in love with her. He laughed about it wryly. And by that time it seemed to Dell as if she had known him for years.

"I guess the joke's on me," he said. "Always before this, I've gone out with girls, made love to them, and then gone on to others. But there isn't going to be any lovemaking for me to-night. I want to kiss you more than I've ever wanted to kiss any one before. And I won't do it because I won't dare risk it. I value your good opinion too darned much."

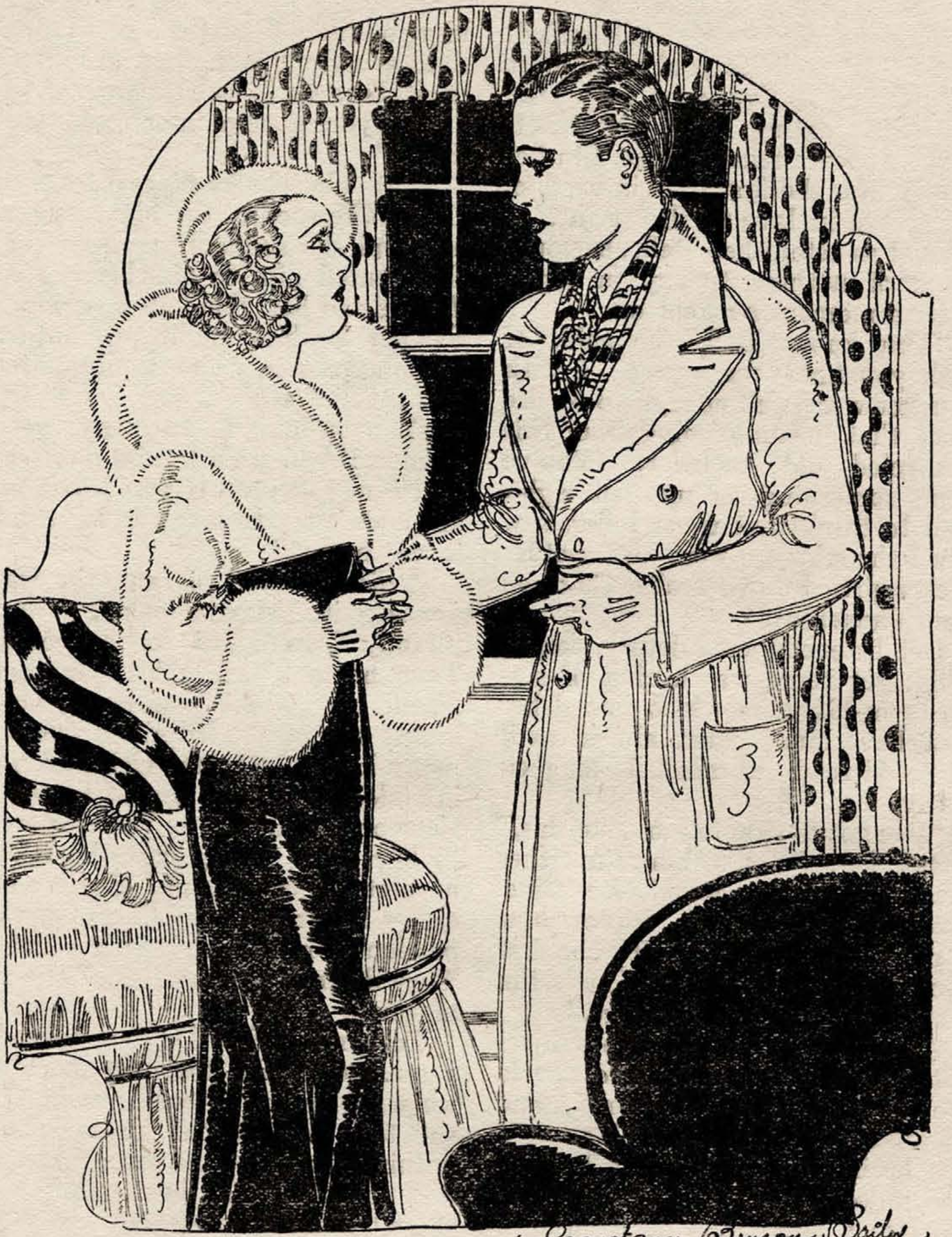
That bit of frankness touched Dell. The spell of the night was on her, and she suddenly realized that she wanted him to kiss her. That if he kissed her, this half love which she felt for him might turn into a blinding passion which would match his.

"You wouldn't lose my good opinion if you tried to kiss me," she told him softly. "If you loved me and didn't try to kiss me, I'd think it was funny."

It didn't sound blatant, the way she said it. Martin looked at her, joyfully incredulous for a second. Then he took her in his arms and kissed her as she had never been kissed before. It was the first of many kisses. At first Dell had not intended that there should be more than one. But her refusals seemed to hurt him, and at last she made no pretense of refusing. She lay inert in his arms, trembling with the passion of his kisses, crying a little. They did not get home until almost morning.

To her surprise, Dell experienced a sense of shame the next morning when she awoke. It was in vain that she told herself that kisses meant nothing, and that she loved Martin. She knew in her heart that she should not have let him kiss her, and that she did not love him. Not yet, anyhow. She wanted him, she admitted. She wanted to marry him. He was a matrimonial prize such as few girls ever capture. Maybe love would come later. She was not, like him, able to fall in love at first sight.

She had to be at the inn early. The Freeport Inn catered only to



"Who gave you the right to pick my friends? I've refused to marry you, and I've told you I didn't love you. You're no more to me than—than the postman."

the very rich and socially prominent, and was as exclusive as it was expensive. Most of its business was done in the summer, but situated as it was on the shores of Lake Champlain, it offered every known form of winter sport. Almost as many people patronized it in winter as in summer, and during the winter carnival weeks, it was always so crowded that extra waitresses had to be hired. Dell, home for Christmas vacation, was always one of these extra waitresses.

The work in the morning was continuous, beginning with the early risers who were going out onto the lake to the fish shanties. Late breakfasts overlapped early luncheons, so that not till the middle of the afternoon did the girls get time off. The servants entered the inn through a door in the latticework under the vast high veranda, and passed on through another door into the basement.

At three o'clock Dell stood just inside the lattice door putting on her gloves and buttoning her coat against the bitter cold outside, when she heard voices from the pathway. She could see Martin with two of his friends, and she did not go out at once, because she was afraid that she would not be able to greet him without embarrassment. She realized instinctively, that from outside in the bright sunshine, he would not be able to penetrate the murk behind the lattice-work, though she could see him perfectly. She did not mean to listen, but she could hardly help herself.

"I was out last night with that swell-looking blond who waits on my table," she heard Martin say. "And what a girl!"

Stunned, she stood there, straining to hear every word.

"I suppose you tried the old line on her, the one my wife says you tried on her. 'I'm not going to kiss you because I care too much about what you think of me.' "

Martin grinned good-humoredly. "Well," he replied, "you've got to admit that it's different from most lines, and that it usually works, even if it didn't on your darling."

"Oh, I'll admit it works," the other man said grudgingly. "You could make most any of 'em believe you were telling the truth. Well, are you going to marry the girl?"

"Don't be silly, Mac. When I marry anybody, it won't be a girl I can kiss the first time I go out with her."

"You're like all the great lovers," the other man grew sarcastic. "You've had it so easy, you're scared of your competitors. You've only——"

They drifted on out of earshot, leaving Dell standing rigid, her face white, her eyes cold and staring.

Dell did not cry. She was so angry at first, that she could not think clearly. When the anger died down a little, and she was able for a minute to stop hating Martin, her ideas gradually changed. He was still just as good a prize as he had been before. Common sense told her that. She had had her chance to win him, and she had flubbed it. He had been testing her out, and she had kissed him against her better judgment, because she had supposed it was what she must do to please him.

Now the point to be decided by cold analytical reasoning, was whether or not she still wanted him.

She decided that she did. And now she had the upper hand, because she knew how she stood with him, and he didn't know that she knew. In the three remaining days of his stay at the inn, she might be able to do a great deal if she tried hard enough. If she didn't win him, she would at least have had a good time.

The next morning Dell met Tommy. He had lines, pails, wood, cooking utensils and food loaded on a sled.

"I'm going to take my shanty out over the reef and fish for a couple of days," he told her. "Better skate out and see me this afternoon—if you can spare time from the new boy friend."

Dell talked with him a while, and then went on up to the inn. Martin was the first of her people down for breakfast, and she found, in conversation with him, that he, too, was going out to one of the shanties for a day's fishing. Dell said nothing, but a plan was forming in her mind. Modern young ladies don't sit around and wait for men to come to them, she remembered.

That afternoon, when she was off duty, she took her skates and went down to the wharf. Far out across the smooth expanse of ice, she could see the tiny specks which she knew were fish shanties. She put on her skates and started toward them. She covered the distance rapidly, with lazy, powerful strokes.

Fishing through the ice for smelt is a winter industry on Lake Champlain. The fishermen have shanties, about six feet long and four feet wide, equipped with bunks which fold up against the walls during the daytime, a folding table, a stove for warmth and for cooking. The shanties are on runners, and are dragged out to the fishing grounds, where they are anchored to keep the wind from carrying them away. Holes are cut in the ice to correspond to trap doors in the floor of each shanty, and the men sit in them fishing, sometimes for weeks on end without going ashore. The fish company truck drives out, buys their catch and brings them provisions.

That afternoon the ice, which is kept clear almost all winter by the driving force of the wind sweeping unobstructed over the lake's hundred and fifty mile length, was here and there patched with snow. But it did not spoil the skating.

When Dell at last reached the shanties, she went first to Tommy's. He was enjoying a fine run of smelt at the moment, and did not try to detain her when she informed him that she must leave and see Martin before she went ashore.

"I might have known you wouldn't come clear out here just to see me," he grinned, and went on with his fishing.

The shanties which the hotel kept for its guests, were all painted red, and Dell could tell Martin's only by number. It was on the opposite side of the reef, and with several shanties between it and the smelt run, Martin was having no luck at all. He welcomed Dell profusely.

She came inside, took off her skates, and sat in the chair opposite him.

"But this is perfectly grand," he told her. "I was bored to tears. And then the one person who could never bore me, came along. Oh, honey"—he was suddenly humble—"you look perfectly adorable. May I kiss you?"

But Dell was all ready with her story.

"Martin," she said, "that was one of the things I came out here to talk to you about. I can't kiss you any more. It's not right. I never kissed a man the first time I went out with him before in my whole life. You—I guess you swept me off my feet. But it won't happen again. It's not right."

Martin nodded slowly.

"If you think we shouldn't, then we won't," he said. "You know you can do anything to me."

But it was very evident that he did not intend to abide by that promise. Slowly, indirectly, he went about the task of breaking down Dell's resolve. Now that she could sit back detached and watch his performance, she had to admit that it was the finest thing of its kind she had ever seen. It was done so perfectly that again and again she found herself swayed by his words and ideas. Yet knowing that it was a line, kept her from yielding.

Martin favored her with his whole repertoire. And when he found her still adamant, she saw another side of him. He came suddenly across the shanty and tried to force her to kiss him. She held him off like an expert, without losing her temper.

"Please, Martin," she said. "Please don't."

She might just as well have asked a favor of the wind. Martin had experienced her kisses, and he wanted more of them. He was willing to be adroit as long as it seemed to be gaining him his ends. But if adroitness failed, there was always force. Dell found out that either Martin French had been lying to his friends about his admiration for girls who would not allow themselves to be kissed, or else he reserved that admiration for girls in his own walk of life. Waitresses were just a pleasant interlude.

"I won't stop," he told her. "I'm mad about you. I'm wild about you."

Dell shook herself free, and stood facing him, her anger rising.

"Martin," she said, "if you don't stop, I'll—I'll call for help. I'll scream, and with all the shanties close to us, somebody will be here darn quick. Now be sensible."

Martin paused, uncertain, his face a thundercloud. Then he turned and stalked through the door, slamming it after him. Dell dropped into a chair, relief flooding her. She found she had been under greater strain than she had supposed. She stayed in the cabin because she did not know what Martin's next move would be. She had taken her skates off, and his were still lying over in the corner. She had picked up one skate and started to put it on, when he returned.

"Martin," she said, in a desperate effort at reconciliation, "please don't take it like that. Please." She wanted to tell him that he was being inconsistent, but she could not. Not without telling him how she recognized his inconsistency.

"But, Dell," he said, and he threw his hands wide in a hopeless gesture, "I can't stand it. I can't stand having you near me, loving you the way I do, and not being able to kiss you. I can't stand it."

"Then I'll go away. Because you can't go on kissing me the way you did last night. If I let you, you'll think I'm cheap."

She began putting on her skates again, but he stopped her.

"No, Dell. You can't go. Please, Dell."

Again he tried to take her in his arms, and again she eluded him. And it was then that she became aware of a new sound. The sound of runners on ice. The shanty was moving with the wind.

She tried to tear herself free from him but he was expecting the move, and forestalled her. Then she tried to scream. But again he was too quick for her. He crushed his hand over her mouth, and held it there.

"Go ahead and yell," he snarled, in a tone she had never heard him use before. "I fixed that. We'll be far enough away in a couple of minutes so you can howl till you're blue in the face."

Gradually Dell's first, unreasoning panic, the panic which comes to any person on finding himself held prisoner, gave way to an even deeper panic built on thought. They were traveling north ahead of a south gale. And Dell knew that only a mile or so north of them, where the lake widened, there was open water. Lake Champlain does not freeze like the smaller bodies of water. The south end, which is comparatively narrow, freezes early, the middle part, where they were, freezes next, and often the wide lake does not freeze at all. The shanty was gaining momentum every moment, its flat side acting as a sail. Shortly, Dell knew, unless they jumped out onto the ice, they would both drown. Martin, a man who knew nothing about the lake, did not realize this.

She tried to tell him. While she fought him, she panted out the information. But he only vaguely listened. And he laughed at her, a hard, chilling laugh that had no mirth in it.

He no longer tried to keep her from screaming, but she did not scream because she knew they were too far from the other shanties for any one to hear her. Instead, she tried to fight her way to the door.

Her mind worked with startling clearness. She knew about how fast they were going, and about how far they had to go. And she realized that there was little time left. Again and again she tried to break away from him and jump out onto the ice. But always he caught her and held her. Over and over she screamed at him that open water lay ahead of them. That it was inexorably closer every minute.

But it did not good. All his life Martin had lied to get himself out of tight situations. He thought Dell was doing the same thing now. He was no longer trying to kiss her. He knew there would be plenty of time for that later on. He contented himself with keeping her there in the shanty, not letting her escape.

Dell grew frantic, almost insane with terror. She broke away from him and went to the tiny window In the gathering dusk she could see the angry black of open water not a hundred yards ahead. Some of her terror must have communicated itself to him, because he came over beside her to look. In the split second of complete quiet, Dell heard the ring of skate runners. Then Martin shrieked and jumped toward the door. As he did so, the shanty's momentum was checked so short that it threw Dell to her knees, and catapulated Martin on past the door, into the wall.

They heard a shout outside, and Dell reached the door first. The shanty had stopped moving, and on its south side, his skates dug into the ice as he leaned back on the rope with which it had been anchored, stood Tommy.

Martin came out, looking at the black water and trembling violently. Dell kept her eyes turned away from him.

"You know," Tommy said grimly, "it was a good thing I tagged along, I guess. I saw your shanty start to go places, so I put on my skates and followed. Why didn't you jump out?"

"We didn't know it was moving," Martin lied quickly, before Dell could answer.

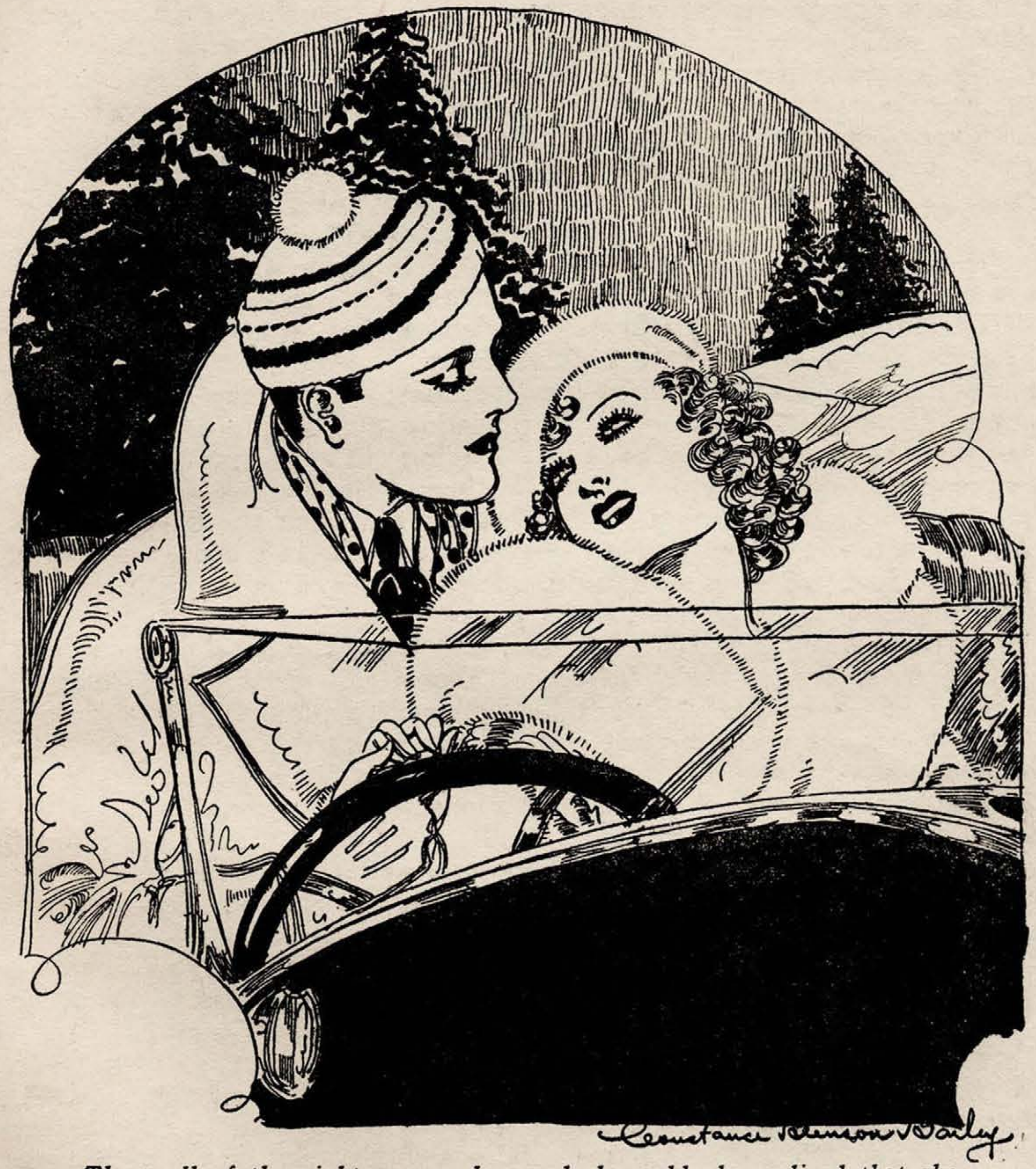
"I suppose I didn't see you come out and deliberately hack the anchor rope," Tommy snapped.

A long silence followed. Finally Tommy broke it.

"You two put on your skates and help me anchor this shack again. Then I'll start back. You got an extra spike, French?"

Martin had one. They drove it deep into the ice, and fastened the end of the rope to it.

"Now I guess I'll be on my way,"



The spell of the night was on her, and she suddenly realized that she wanted him to kiss her. "You wouldn't lose my good opinion if you tried to kiss me," she told him softly.

Tommy said, "and leave you two love birds alone."

"I'm coming along," Dell said. Her voice was not quite steady now that the strain was over.

Martin went with them. They started away, in the teeth of the wind, Tommy leading. And suddenly he came to swerving stop, at the same time grabbing his two companions. Dell, looking up quickly, saw open water ahead of them. Automatically, she turned her eyes to Tommy, and met his quizzical glance. A wry smile twisted the corners of his mouth.

"This was only a crack when I came along," he said. "Now there must be twenty-five feet of water here."

It took a few seconds for Dell to realize what that ever-widening strip of water between them and the main ice, meant.

"Then—then we're marooned on this flow," she demanded incredulously.

He nodded. "It looks that way."

"Well, we can swim that distance, anyway," Martin French said.

"Go ahead," Tommy told him. "I'm not having any ice water baths for mine, thanks. And when you get to the other side it will be a toss-up whether you can get to shore before you freeze."

"But what are we going to do? We've got to do something."

"There isn't anything we can do. They'll pick us up to-morrow, if the ice cake holds together."

They went back to the shanty.

"We might as well eat," Dell said. "I'll see if I can make a meal out of what's here."

"Better save some of it for tomorrow," Tommy suggested.

"There isn't even enough for tonight," Martin told him. "We'll be off here to-morrow. Use it all."

Tommy dressed the smelt that were in the fish pail. There were quite a few of them, but pitifully little else. Only the left-overs from Martin's luncheon. Dell still felt hungry when they had finished, but the meal had made them all more cheerful. The cheerfulness grew as the evening progressed. Outside the wind had died down, so that they were drifting slower, even though the current was still taking them away from the main body of ice. The weather was much warmer, too, and inside, with the fire going, they removed their light leather skating coats. Dell began almost to enjoy the experience. Yet always she gave thanks deep in her heart that Tommy was there.

Martin brought out a liquor bottle and offered them each a drink. Dell refused, and Tommy took only a swallow. Martin drank quite a lot.

"You don't know what's good for you," he told them. "You won't need any fire if you get a couple of shots of this down you."

"I'll stick to the fire, as long as it lasts," Tommy told him. "That stuff tasted worse than bootleg liquor."

Later on, Tommy went to the window and stood for a long time looking out. At last he called the others. Outside a dense fog was rolling out from the land, enveloping the shack in a dead, wet vapor. It gave everything a ghostly appearance.

"I was afraid of this thaw," Tommy said. "I hope the fog will be gone by morning."

But it was not gone by morning. Dell slept a few hours, and when she awoke, Tommy was already up. She woke cold. The fog enveloped them, and they could not see ten feet from the shanty. Tommy's face was grim.

"Can—can they find us in this?" Dell asked. She knew what the answer would be.

"They may run onto us," he shrugged. "Or we may drift ashore. But it's a thousand to one chance. Even with planes, they won't find us to-day."

Martin joined them.

"I'm hungry as the dickens," he told them. "What are we going to eat?"

"I'll bite," Tommy said. "What *are* we going to eat?"

Martin went back into the shanty and rummaged around, but found nothing. At Tommy's suggestion, they went to the thick side of their flow, and drank deep, so that they would forget their hunger. But they dared not drink too much, and the icy water went down only a few sips at a time.

After that they walked around to keep warm. They dared not use any more of their pitifully small supply of wood, for fear they might be there another night, or might get fish which would need to be cooked. Martin walked to the edge of the flow and called into the mist, again and again. But there was no answer, so finally he gave it up. He went back to the shack, then, and finished the rest of the liquor in the bottle. When Dell entered the shack a while later, he was drunk, and again tried to kiss her. She eluded him easily, and went outside.

Tommy had rigged lines through four holes in the ice, but he was having no luck. The flow had long since left the shallow water of the reef, and there were few smelt in the deeper places. Besides that, his sinkers weren't heavy enough to cut down the angle of his lines. The fog held, and they heard or saw no one.

Tommy remained cheerful in spite of everything. He and Dell walked around to keep warm, but they only partially succeeded. The fog pressed in upon them, making everything weird and unreal. The dampness of it accentuated the cold, and chilled them to the very bone.

"Ugh," Tommy said disgustedly, "it's like walking around in a dish of oatmeal. You can pretty near feel it. I'll bet our folks are plenty worried right now. Especially yours. Mine never know what fool thing I'll be doing next."

Several times they heard airplanes. But they were on the direct New York-Montreal route, so that such a circumstance would not have been strange whether there were searchers out or not.

Martin had produced another bottle from his pocket, which Tommy stole during the afternoon, and threw away. Dell did not begin to mind the cold or the hunger very much till nightfall. Then it was very bad. They sat huddled up in the shanty, and in spite of Tommy's studied attempts at cheerfulness, the time dragged, and there were long periods of silence. The grim reality of the situation had taken hold of them all.

Dell had never been so cold before in her life. It was a cumulative cold. It hadn't seemed bad at first, but there was no relief from it, and there was no food to make body heat. She was miserable from the gnawing hunger which gave her no rest, and the cold found her weakened, unable to combat it. Martin's attitude did not help. When he talked, he told them over and over that no help would come, that they would die out there. He cried in drunken, maudlin despair. Dell knew that if there had been no Tommy to counteract that unhealthy attitude, she would have gone mad. As it was, she wanted to cry, or to laugh recklessly. Sometimes she could hardly keep herself from doing one or the other. If only either the hunger or the cold would let up for just one minute. She kept dwelling morbidly on that. If it would only let up for just one minute, she thought she could go back to it cheerfully. But it never did. The hunger grew worse, and the cold more intense with the darkness.

For several seconds she was aware that Tommy was watching her intently. Suddenly he rose and took her hand.

"Come on," he said. "We're going to run. You're close to hysterics."

Dell knew that she was not close to hysterics. She hadn't uttered a sound. She told him so. Only she seemed to have to shriek to make herself heard.

"I won't go. I can't go. I can't move."

He pulled her roughly to her feet, and half dragged her outside. Then they ran. At first Dell stumbled again and again. But gradually, as the blood began to circulate, she could run without stumbling. Her legs grew tired. Her whole body seemed weak, as if her blood had turned to water. She began to drag back, making him pull her. He warned her twice, then stopped and slapped her, a stinging blow on the face. It cleared her head like magic. For an instant they glared at each other, and then Tommy dragged her forward again. In that instant she hated him. Hated him as she had never hated Martin, even when he had been holding her prisoner in the shanty.

"Either you run," he told her grimly, "or there'll be more of those."

Somehow she knew he meant it, and she ran. But she hated him.

After a long while she began to beg him to let her stop. The cold inside her had abated. It no longer seemed unbearable. But fatigue had taken its place. He let her walk then. But he would not let her stop altogether. And she was afraid of him. She had never seen him like that before. Even in her misery, she thrilled to his mastery.

After what seemed to Dell like hours of walking and running, Tommy stopped at the shanty and told Martin to come out. Martin refused, and there was a short fight. Then Tommy dragged him out, and mercilessly forced him to walk with them. After that the grind went on. Twice Dell slumped to the ice in a heap. But each time Tommy dragged her brutally to her feet and made her go on. She welcomed each of Martin's rebellions, because they gave her a chance to rest. Vaguely she realized that Tommy was doing this to save her life, to keep her from freezing. Yet she did not want to live. She did not care. Life was too miserable, too horrible just now, to be borne.

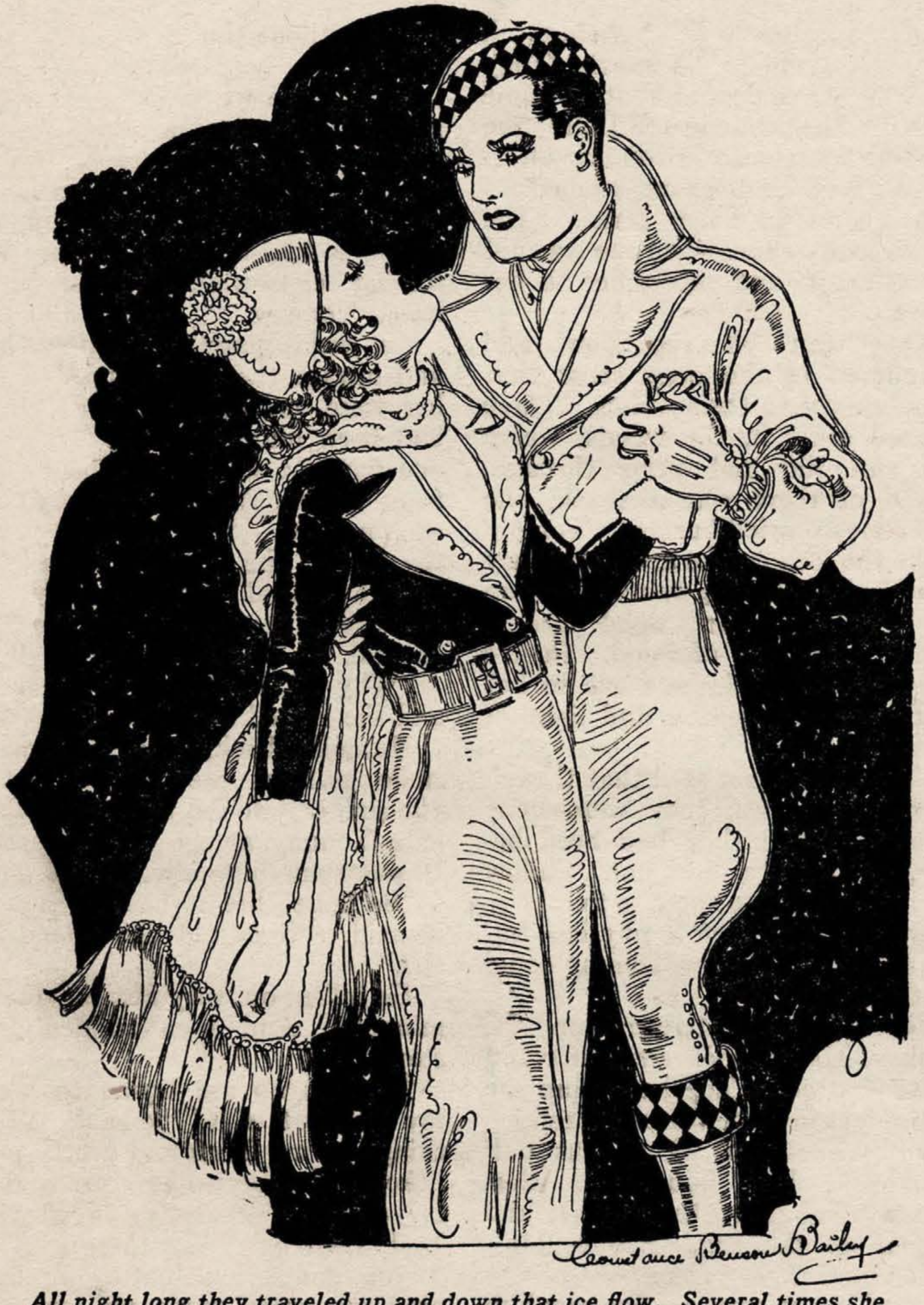
All night long they traveled up and down that ice flow. Dell grew gradually more and more sleepy, until it seemed as if she could not hold her eyes open. It seemed incredible that she should go to sleep on her feet, yet several times she came close to it. Each time, Tommy shook her awake.

"You can't go to sleep," he stormed at her. "If you do, you'll never wake up. Get hold of yourself, will you? Try to help me."

Dell hated him. She hated him fiendishly for making her run and walk, and for keeping her awake. Once she caught herself thinking that when they came near the edge of the flow, it would be easy to shove him off. Just a tiny push would do it. He was almost tottering.

With a little shudder, she realized that she was thinking about murder. The disgust she felt for herself, brought her wide awake for long minutes.

She lost track of time. In a way that was blessed. She only knew that the fog did not lift when it was light again, and that again it grew dark. Sometimes they rested, but always Tommy forced them up again. Brutally made them get onto their feet and stumble along. The hunger was worse. They stopped often at the edge of the flow to drink. Dell noticed that now



All night long they traveled up and down that ice flow. Several times she came close to going to sleep on her feet. Each time, Tommy shook her awake. "You can't go to sleep. If you do, you'll never wake up."

Tommy did not go close to the edge when they were near him. She was glad he didn't.

While it was still dark, the fog lifted, and it grew bitter, searing cold.

"Now's the time for the fire," Tommy told them.

They cut up the table and the bunks with the hatchet, and built a bonfire on the ice. The heat was blessed, and some one might see the flame. The shoreline was close, all dark trees and white snow. They were drifting toward it. Time seemed to jerk along for Dell. She was not conscious of dropping off to sleep. Yet that shore seemed to leap nearer in huge jerks. The gentle bump came when she was not expecting it, and threw her to her knees.

They ran off the flow and floundered in the deep snow that came almost to their waists. There was no crust in the woods, where the sun did not seep through. Ahead of them was a shack, one side almost buried in snow. Tommy broke the lock on the door, and they went inside. There was a stove, an old keg of nails, and wood piled in the corner. Lots of wood. In five minutes they had the stove so hot that it glowed in the dim light of breaking day.

Vaguely Dell realized that though they were warm, they were little better off than they had been before. They could not wallow through that deep snow to find help. It would have been a physical impossibility. Not even Tommy could do that.

There were mattresses on the bunks. Martin took one bunk and Dell the other. The last thing she realized clearly before she dropped off into a stupor which was half sleep and half faint, was that Tommy had taken the hatchet and broken up the keg. She couldn't understand that. There was plenty of wood in the corner. She saw him fitting two of the staves to his feet like rude snowshoes.

Once she came out of her stupor momentarily, to realize that Martin was just as he had thrown himself onto his bunk, but that Tommy was not there in the shanty. She dropped off into unconsciousness again without thinking much about it.

Next there were people, horrible, grotesque people, and she had hard work telling which were real, and which were part of her nightmares. Again in those dreams Martin was trying to kiss her, and Tommy was forcing her to walk on and on. She hated Tommy.

She woke many times after that, and always the figures surrounding her were vague, blurred, as things had been blurred in the fog. But one day she woke peacefully, as if from a long sleep, and everything was natural. The hospital room, the tables, the chairs, the bed, all looked natural. And Tommy, sitting beside the bed, looked perfectly natural.

"Why hello, Tommy," she said, and she smiled at him.

He smiled back, but it was a misty smile, as if he knew a great relief. She suddenly found that she did not hate Tommy as she had supposed. It was something else.

"So there's life in the old girl yet," he said. "Good old life. Good old girl."

He talked on, very fast for several minutes. And then suddenly he stopped.

"There's no use trying to laugh my way out of it," he said. "This thing has me down and pretty near licked. I've been like a crazy man for days. I've always loved you, Dell. But being out there so close to you, and seeing what a thoroughbred you were, made me love you all the more. And instead of being able to make you love me, I had to make you hate me. Hate me enough so maybe you wanted to kill me."

"I thought I hated you," she told him softly, "but you can't think straight when you're in anguish. I—I don't hate you now."

Still his face was serious, worried. Couldn't he see that there was nothing to worry about?

"But what about Martin? He came through it better than you did, and he'll be after you."

"I found out about Martin," Dell shrugged. "That—that awfulness did something for me. When you're as close to death as that, and fighting to keep breath in your body, you get back to primitive values. Money doesn't matter. Nothing matters but courage and strength. Martin was a coward and pretty weak. You saved our lives. You—you were wonderful, Tommy.

"Then you don't love him?"

She shook her head slowly. Then paused and waited. But still he said nothing, only watched her with a worried frown.

"Oh, Tommy, can't you see? Love is one of the primitive things that matters. Love matters above money, or anything else. If you have love, you're happy. If you don't, you're miserable. I found out that I loved you. That I've loved you for ages and have been fighting against it, and against you because you wanted to take away my freedom. Now I'm not going to fight any longer, Tommy. I don't want to be free. I want to be yours. I'll be happy wherever you are. Come down here, Tommy, where I can kiss you and muss up your hair and know that you're real."

Tommy was silent for a moment, then bending down he took her in his arms and crushed her close to him.

"Oh, darling, I've been so 'fraid I was going to lose you. 'Fraid that you wouldn't love me." Suddenly he stopped talking and his lips found hers in a kiss that seemed to touch their very souls and make them one in that moment of ecstasy.

* * *

NOTE TO LOVERS

HOLD no shame that her lips, her laughing eyes,
  Her tiny feet and gaily colored dress
Calls from your eager heart its deepest sighs,
  And melts your greatest frown to gentleness.

Hold no shame her lightest spoken word
  Echoes within your heart a grave command,
Nor that her tender murmurs, half unheard,
  Come like a sweet rain to a parching land.

Love needs no alibi, no masquerade,
  No hidden trysts, no secret sacrament;
Love is too powerful to walk afraid
  Of all oppression seeking its descent.

Hold Love's hand beneath the brightest sun
And laugh with her—nor hide from any one!

BERT COOKSLEY.

Reckless Bride

By

Peggy Rutherford

A Two-part Story

Part II.

CHAPTER III.

I NEVER quite knew how long I spent swimming and splashing in the sunny, tree-bordered pool. To my tense nerves, it seemed hours while I kept my eyes strained in the direction of the campus sloping up to Hillcrest Manor, teeth chattering in cold panic lest some of the school authorities would appear before I could manage to get away.

But it couldn't have been more than a few minutes before the cameraman called out through the trees that he was finished.

Trembling with relief, I ducked under the shadowy water at the far end of the pool just as he emerged once more onto the little beach.

"Good work, sister! Here's your money, one hundred bucks." Jauntily he counted out the bills, then stooped and laid them on the sand, weighting them down with a stone. "Say, we've got a car here. Want a lift anywhere?" he drawled, his eyes a little too friendly. Something in their expression made my heart knock with sharp apprehension.

I hardened my face. "No, thank you." I shook my head so definitely that he shrugged, grinned knowingly and started back through the woods.

I was frantic for them to be off. Shivering with chill and nervousness, I waited under the water until I heard their voices retreating through the trees, mingling presently with the roar of a motor that soon died away in the distance.

Like a flash, I was out of the pool, scrambling up the big rock where I had left my clothes. My hands were like ice after being in the cold water so long, but I managed to dress faster than I ever had in my life before.

My spirits rose like a bird as I snatched up the money from the sand and stuffed it down the neck of my sweater. How glad I was that I'd had the courage to earn it! Now, nothing could keep me from reaching Don before he sailed.

Breathlessly, I began picking my way through the woods and soon found the tracks made by the movie people's car. Why on earth had I been so childishly self-conscious as to refuse a lift into the village?—I wondered, running as fast as I could along the bumpy trail. But it was better that I had. I didn't dare leave any traces behind that could easily be followed! Once Miss Hill discovered my escape, she would lose no time in notifying Oliver.

What he would do if he caught me this time, I didn't dare to think. All I knew was I had to get to Don before I could be traced there. Then, somehow, we could manage to outwit Oliver so he couldn't make trouble for Don. How, I didn't attempt to fathom out now. I was straining every ounce of energy on getting completely away from Hillcrest before I could be overtaken.

The thick underbrush soon tore off my béret and I stuffed it in the pocket of my tweed jacket. Twice I turned my ankle on the rough ground as I ran, but I kept on, ignoring the pain. Would I never reach the road? It seemed hours before I finally emerged from the last strip of woods and climbed over a stone fence onto the highway. Here it was smoother going. I tore down the steep road, my ears strained for the sound of a car pursuing me.

The road curved sharply and as I stumbled along, hopelessly confused, I saw a quarter of a mile ahead crossroads bristling with signposts. Could I ever make it? My breath was burning my throat like fire. My heart was a sharp knife in my side. But, doggedly, my feet kept pounding on, driven by the desperate need of reaching the village where I could get a train to New York. Or, better, still, there might be an airport near enough so I could get a plane. That blessed money! I could feel the wad of it pressing the flesh under my sweater like a soothing hand of encouraging help.

As I reached the crossing at last, gasping, breathless, it seemed there was something strangely familiar about the place. And no wonder! A glance at the nearest sign told me I had stumbled onto the State highway. This was the same route Don and I had come the night we had eloped from Betty's! We had passed by this very spot, little dreaming how soon we were to be torn from each other's arms.

The agony of that night surged over me in a black tide. A sob ached in my throat. I couldn't see the signs across the road for the hot tears stinging my eyes. But only for a moment. There was no time for futile regret now.

Blinking away the tears, I ran across the broad highway. Then, as I began searching the signs, I heard something that made my heart jump into my throat. Down the road a high-powered car was zooming toward me.

Instantly, my brain flamed with alarm. It might be the police! Perhaps Miss Hill had already set them on my trail! Quick as lightning, I darted down the bank and hid in a clump of bushes, so thick that I couldn't see the road as I crouched there, cold with panic, praying desperately that the car would pass on.

But it didn't pass. With a screech of brakes that froze my blood sickeningly, it ground to a stop in the very spot where I had stood a moment before. Heavy feet leaped to the asphalt, bounded down the bank, came crashing through the bushes.

Panting with stark terror, I fled through the brush like a wild, hunted animal. But it was no use. I was half paralyzed with fatigue and fear. A hand reached out and caught my arm in a firm grip.

Sobbing stormily, I tried to fight free. But I was whirled helplessly about to face the dazzling sunlight.

Then, suddenly, I wondered if I had lost my mind.

"Lynore!" It was a sharp breath, harsh with unbelief.

My heart stopped beating. Blinking against the blinding glare I stared up incredulously at the tall form towering over me while the world stood still. My senses reeled dizzily. Oh, it couldn't be Don!

With a hoarse groan he stooped and engulfed me in his arms. Hungry, trembling arms that strained me tight in an agony of relief.

"Don!" I couldn't believe it. In another minute I'd wake up and find it was just a dream. With a sob, I put up my hand, half fearfully, to touch his face, and felt my heart leap wildly. No, it wasn't a dream!

"Oh, Don!" Hysterically laughing and crying at the same time, I crumpled against him, clinging to him while wave after wave of delirious joy surged over me.

For an endless moment we clung together, not able to speak, not asking the reason for this unbelievable miracle, knowing only that somehow our arms were where they belonged at last, each crushing the other heart to heart, lips mated again in starved breathless kisses, while the long weeks of cruel loneliness faded away.

"Darling!" Don's hand trembled over my hair, my eyelids, my throat, as though to convince himself that I was real. He drew back a little, his eyes searching mine. "Where on earth have you been?" he demanded passionately.

His face bending over mine was so haggard and drawn that my heart contracted seeing how terribly he, too, had suffered.

Unsteadily, I pointed back up the road where I had come, telling him about Hillcrest Manor and explaining that I hadn't dared to let him know where I was for fear Oliver would carry out his threat to ruin his career if we tried to see each other.

"There was nothing I could do but wait for my birthday. But when I saw in the paper that you were ordered to sail, I couldn't wait! So to-day I—I ran away from school," I faltered, my cheeks tingling guiltily. "I was trying to find some way to get to New York when you came along. Oh, Don, how did you ever happen to find me?" I stared up at him breathlessly.

He laughed grimly. "I was hunting you, darling. I've been doing little else the last three weeks. I was in torture, not knowing what Oliver had done with you, but I couldn't find the least trace of you. I've been back to the inn at least twenty times but the manager swore he hadn't seen either of you since you left that night. The last few days I've had to be in Washington getting final instructions before sailing, and I just got back this morning. I stopped at home long enough to learn if there had been any word from you, then I drove up here again. I was determined to find you before I sailed. I went to the inn once again, but I got the same answer as before. I knew Betty Long's camp was closed, but I wasn't leaving any stone unturned to find you. I was on my way there when I saw you run across the road. I couldn't believe it was you, but I had to make sure. I'm sorry if I scared you half to death, dear!" He strained me convulsively against him, pressing his lips tenderly over my face.

"I thought you were the police," I murmured, shuddering.

He gave a start, his mouth tightening. "Say, that's right! There's no telling how soon they'll be after you. But this time they're not going to find you!" There was a ring of triumph in his deep voice as he picked me up in his arms and strode through the bushes and up the bank.

His big roadster was standing in the road, and the familiar sight of it was a quick thrill. Nothing could overtake us now! My blood sang in my veins as he lifted me in, then quickly leaped in beside me. With a quick twist of his strong brown hands on the wheel, he whirled the car around and sent it speeding down the pike the way he had come.

With a sigh of content I lay back in the deep seat, limp, half bewildered with the wonderful reality of his nearness after the terrific anxiety of trying to reach him. Yet inside I was still tense with apprehension that lay like a cold shadow on my heart. Suppose I would only be the means of bringing him trouble that would ruin his career!

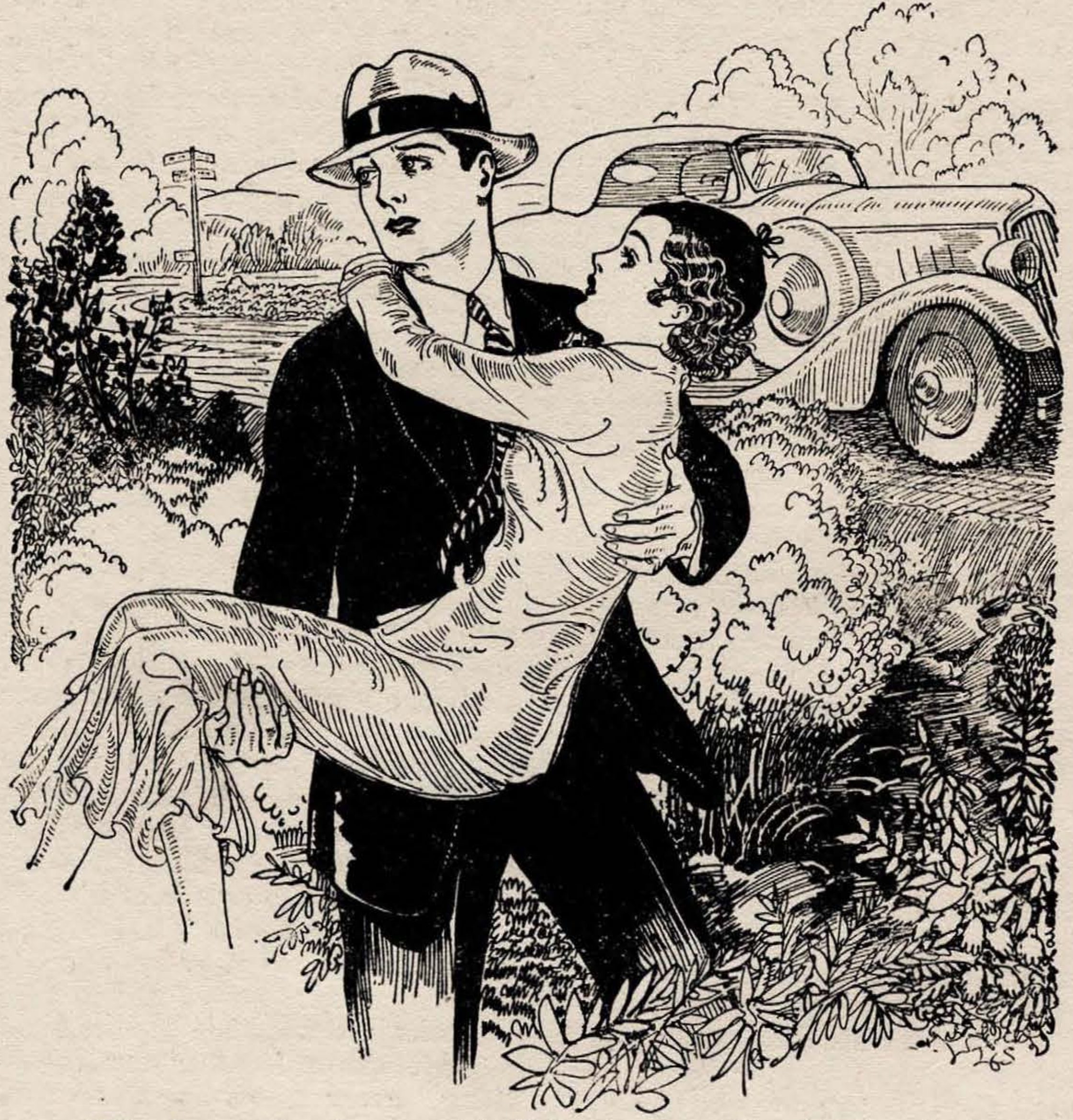
"Oh, Don, where can you hide me so Oliver won't find me?" I asked breathlessly against the stiff breeze of our rushing.

"That's something I'll have to figure out by the time we reach New York," he said thoughtfully. "But don't you worry about that, dear. You just leave everything to your husband."

With a confident little laugh, he cuddled me close against him with one warm arm so that I couldn't see anything but the wall of his big shoulders and the profile of his face above the wheel. A thrill of hot, uprushing joy swept everything else from my mind.

It was just as it had been the night of our elopement. Only now, everything, every moment was more precious for the weeks of separation that had gone between. The complete wonder of our love would only be the more poignant, the more overwhelmingly sweet for the anguish of our waiting.

Dusk had deepened into night before we finally reached New York. As we drove through the brightly lighted streets, my heart was beating a wild tattoo of mounting excitement. Yet each time we had to stop for traffic I went weak with terror. Every pedestrian that glanced at us in casual interest, every face



"There's no telling how soon they'll be after you. But this time they're not going to find you!" There was a ring of triumph in his deep voice as he picked me up in his arms and strode to his car.

in the cars abreast of ours seemed to be the face of Oliver. I clung, tense and nervous, to Don's arm and slid lower in the seat, keeping my head bent down until at last we turned in at a public garage.

It was one where he wasn't known, he explained as we left the roadster there and transferred to a taxi. As we swung around a corner and sped uptown, I suddenly realized what address Don had given the driver.

I stared at him, surprised. "But that's your apartment, isn't it?"

He shook his head. "Not quite. It's a couple of blocks above. You don't mind walking back that little distance, do you, dear? We'll run less chance of being seen."

"But, Don, it's dangerous for us to go there!" I panted, wanting to go there more than anywhere on earth. "It's the very first place Oliver will go to look for us."

Don laughed, and covered my

hand in a close warm clasp. "When he does, he'll be informed at the office that the place is vacant, which is true. We've sublet it furnished for the rest of the lease. The new tenant is coming to-morrow or the next day. When I left this morning I didn't expect to be back, and mother was getting ready to leave. She's going to live with some friends in Westchester while I'm abroad. So the coast is clear. It will be the safest place we could possibly stay for to-night, at least."

I stared at him breathlessly. "But how can we get in without being seen?"

"We can go around by the service entrance. The janitor's a good scout. He'll take us up in the service elevator and forget about it. It's not exactly the way I had planned to bring home my bride, but it's better than running the chance of being separated again, isn't it, sweetheart?" In the dusk of the speeding taxi his gaze held a light of love and longing that made my heart pound madly.

"Oh, Don—yes!" I whispered tremulously as the cab swung to the curb and stopped.

Luck seemed to be with us. The street was deserted when we got out and walked the short distance to the rear of the apartment house. And a few cautious moments later, we found the hall to his suite empty as he unlocked the door. Even in our tense haste to get in before any one happened along, he picked me up in his arms and carried me over the threshold.

"For good luck!" he said with an unsteady little laugh when we were safely inside.

Without turning on the lights he carried me through the foyer into the big living room beyond, his footsteps on the thick rugs scarcely disturbing the silence. I could feel his heart pounding hard against mine as he made his way through the quiet shadows, and I sensed that he was thrilling to the same riot of emotions that were taking away my breath.

The soft darkness was broken faintly by pale moonlight filtering through the closed Venetian blinds, lying in silver strips on the floor and touching the objects about the room into vague, opalescent shapes. The very atmosphere bathed us in peace, melting away the nervous tension that had tormented us through the past hours.

With a happy sigh, I closed my eyes as Don sank down into a deep divan, still holding me in his arms.

"Darling—home, at last!" He strained me close until our two hearts were thudding as one, until I was half gasping with the sheer joy of our surrender to love.

His lips, hot and demanding, buried themselves in my throat, throbbed over my face, tingled on my eyelids until I looked up at him in breathless wonder, almost fainting with sheer, swooning happiness. Oh, I loved him so much!

His arms were tightening with passionate eagerness, his eyes shone with tender light, his voice was whispering his love with each quick, unsteady breath.

Trembling, I raised my lips parted in breathless, quivering surrender to his. Ecstasy, like liquid fire, raced over me as I felt the stabbing sweetness of my husband's kisses.

His eyes were drowning me with love as he bent over me.

Suddenly, I felt him stiffen. Looking up, I saw he was staring intently over my head. Then, as I turned quickly, instantly on the alert, I heard the sound that had startled him. From an adjoining bedroom came the distinct tread of footsteps.

My heart stopped in a frenzy of terror. Quick as a flash, Don was on his feet, his breath hot with alarm as he picked me up from the divan.

But before he could take a step, there was the sharp click of a door opening. An oblong of yellow light shot across the floor, obliterated instantly as the lights were snapped on in the living room and we found ourselves confronted—not by Oliver, nor an officer as I dreaded, but by the tall, slender figure of a white-haired woman as startled as we.

Don was the first to recover his breath.

"Why, mother!" His laugh was shaky with relief. "I thought you had gone hours ago!"

There was a moment of uncomfortable silence. Then:

"I was detained unexpectedly," came the low reply.

The eyes regarding us were clear blue like Don's, but grave, unsmiling as they took us in with one level, understanding glance.

My cheeks flamed hotly. Confusedly, I put up my hand to my tangled hair.

But Don was drawing me forward eagerly, his arm tight about me.

"Mother, this is Lynore—my wife." There was a ring of triumph in his deep warm voice, and he glanced down at me, his soul in his eyes.

The figure in the doorway seemed to hesitate a moment before she came slowly across the room and took my trembling hands in smooth, firm fingers.

With a quick, eager smile I looked up at her, and suddenly sobered. For there was no answering smile on her handsome, aristocratic face. Only a stern gravity that sent an odd chill of foreboding over me. Why I felt like that, I didn't know. Nothing in the world mattered, now that I was safe with Don. All I could fathom was that it had probably come as an unpleasant shock to his mother to find him so unexpectedly with a strange girl in his arms, and I tried not to blame her for being a little angry.

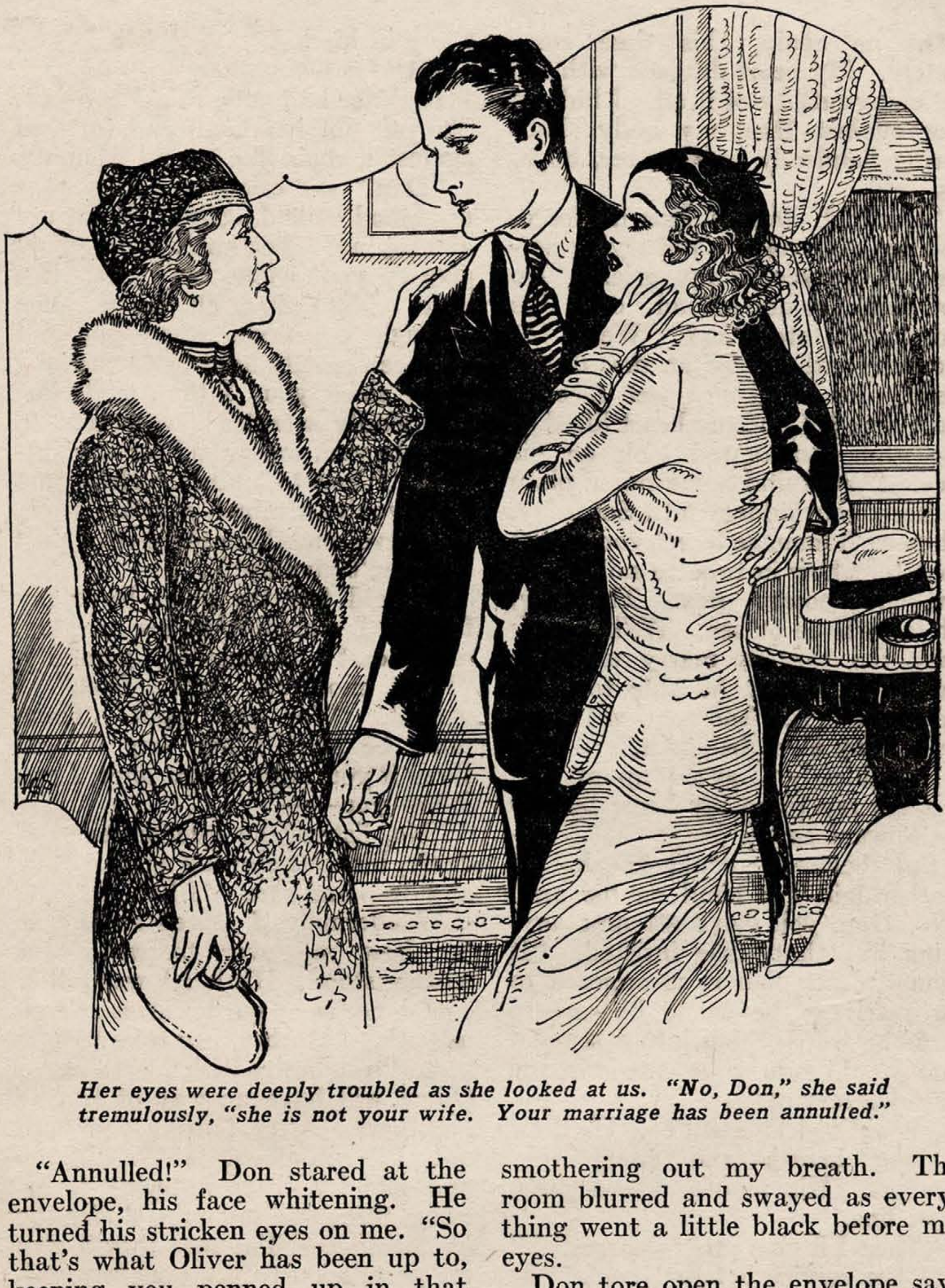
Yet I couldn't shake off this unreasoning panic. I stepped closer to Don, still staring wistfully at his mother. And then I realized, surprisingly, that she was not angry. It was, instead, anxiety that drew her fine features so sharply. Her sweet eyes were deeply troubled as she looked at us.

"No, Don," she said tremulously, "she is not your wife."

I stopped breathing. I just stood there staring at her, braced for what was coming next.

Don's face went sober. His hand tightened on my arm. "I don't understand you, mother," he said evenly. "I told you all about our elopement. You knew I went away this morning determined to find Lynore and——"

"Yes," his mother interrupted unsteadily. "And you had been gone only a few minutes before a man called to see you on a matter he said was very important. When I explained that you had gone, he left this with me and insisted I give it to you as soon as possible." She had moved over to a secretary-desk in the corner, taking a long, stiff envelope from the drawer and handing it to Don. "I didn't know how to reach you quickly, so I decided to wait here in the hope that you might change your plans and return after all. The man was a special messenger. He said this was a court notice that your marriage has been annulled."



Her eyes were deeply troubled as she looked at us. "No, Don," she said tremulously, "she is not your wife. Your marriage has been annulled."

"Annulled!" Don stared at the envelope, his face whitening. He turned his stricken eyes on me. "So that's what Oliver has been up to, keeping you penned up in that boarding school! Why didn't we guess?"

I tried to speak, but no words came. My throat was dry and parched. It felt choked, constricted as though a tight band was slowly smothering out my breath. The room blurred and swayed as everything went a little black before my eyes.

Don tore open the envelope savagely, drew out the legal document. He held it so I could read it, his arms trembling about my shoulders.

But I couldn't see for the hot, blinding tears scalding my eyes. All I knew was that Oliver had separated us again, this time completely. My heart dragged with the sickening futility of it all. I hid my face against Don, my body shuddering helplessly with bitter, hopeless sobs.

"Darling! Don't!" Don implored, holding me tenderly and trying desperately to soothe my grief. "Do you think for one second I'd let this annulment stop us? We'll get around that! Look at me, dear!" Gently he lifted my wet face to meet his eyes, and my heart lifted at the grim, undaunted look on his face. "We'll find some other place to keep you hidden until Saturday. Then we'll manage to get you on the boat somehow in time to sail. Your birthday comes next Thursday, while we'll be at sea. We'll simply have the captain marry us then, and Oliver won't be able to do a thing about it! And that will make everything all right again."

Breathlessly I gazed up at him through my tears, my heart bounding upward again.

But before I could speak, his mother laid her hand on his arm. "No, Don, you can't attempt anything like that," she insisted. "If Lynore's guardian is so opposed to the marriage, he would be sure to turn the whole thing into a scandal that would ruin your career in the consular service."

I could feel Don stiffen. He drew a long breath and stood very straight. His mouth was a grim, tight line.

"Then I'll give up my career! I'll quit the service before I begin!" he muttered dully. "I'll get a job doing anything before I give up Lynore like that. I refuse to sail without her. We're not going to be separated ever again. I mean it!" The out-thrust line of his jaw clutched at my heart, thrilled me insanely. Close in his big arms, I felt a pang of pity for his mother.

Her face had gone white as death. She put out her hand and tottered against a chair like an old woman.

"Don!" she cried, so shrilly that my blood chilled again. "What are you saying? You can't mean you'd give up your whole life's ideals like that! Not after all we've gone through to get you where you are! It's been cruelly hard in all the long years since your father died, but I've gladly sacrificed every cent to educate you, was proud for any suffering I had to endure. Now, just when you've attained your ambition, I deserve something more than this! You can't give up!"

I could feel the color leave my face as I stared from her to Don, my heart hammering painfully. "Your mother's right, Don," I gasped. "You can't quit. There must be some other way for us. Even if you must sail at once, I can follow you——"

"No, listen!" he interrupted suddenly, his eyes glowing again. Blue and deep and sure. "I have it!"

Wonderingly, I stared at him as he drew me over to where his mother stood. His laugh was full of confidence as he put his arms around us both. "Mother, you take Lynore up to Westchester with you to-night. Oliver will have no way of tracing her there. After I drive you both out, I'll run down to Washington and spend to-morrow trying to arrange things to suit us. Under the circumstances, I'm sure they'll give me permission to postpone my sailing date till Thursday. Then we can be married quietly that morning before the boat sails!" He kissed us both breathlessly, laughing his confident little laugh until my own aching disappointment was soothed a little and I forced my spirits to meet the situation as gallantly as he was doing.

It seemed a perfect solution. Even Don's mother was satisfied. Now that she saw our love need not be denied without endangering Don's future, she entered into the plan enthusiastically. Even in our anxious haste to leave the apartment quickly before Oliver could interfere again, she took time to hunt through her bags to get me a warm coat for the ride up to Westchester.

Long before we reached the lovely country home of Mr. and Mrs. English where we were to stay, I knew I was going to love her as my own mother, whom I couldn't remember. And I knew, too, that she was going to take me to her heart as a daughter. For when she introduced me to our elderly host and hostess, who welcomed me with a gracious hospitality that made me almost happy, she put her gentle arm around me and said, with a courageous little laugh:

"I've almost forgiven Lynore for taking Don away from me. It makes it a little easier since I'm to have the fun of their wedding."

I was glad we had arranged things without breaking her heart. Don and I left her talking over hasty plans with her host and hostess who were tremendously thrilled at the prospects. We slipped out to the vestibule a moment before he left.

Then an agony of loneliness swept over me like a black tide. As he took me in his arms and kissed me good-by, I thought I couldn't stand it. It was like tearing the heart out of my body to have him leave me again. What if he couldn't postpone his sailing and would have to go without me? Or what if Oliver would trace me in spite of our caution! I couldn't shake off this sense of impending fate. I clung to him frantically, shivering in his warm arms.

"Oh, Don, it seems we're doomed to be separated!" I gasped. "If anything happens this time, I'll die."

He held me close. "We aren't going to let anything happen, this time, darling," he whispered against my lips. "Isn't it wonderful the way there's an answer to everything if you hunt long enough? It's all turned out so much better than we thought, even better than eloping!"

"Oh, how can you say that?" I panted, staring up at him.

He held my face between his hands. His blue eyes gazing deep in mine were glowing with utter worship. "Because you're too wonderful for any makeshift marriage, Lynore." His voice was low, reverent almost. His arms cradled me as though I were infinitely precious. "My darling, you're the ideal of every dream I've ever had. I love you so much that I'm willing to wait for a wedding that's worthy of you, then there won't be the least chance of any stigma to threaten our happiness. Because, dear, our marriage is going to be paradise."

He kissed me until we both were breathless. Then, with a husky little laugh, he was gone.

CHAPTER IV.

The days that followed were crowded with bewildering, exciting happiness. At times I even forgot the shadow of danger that hovered over me, threatening constantly to shatter our expectations.

Don was with me every possible moment. He had succeeded in obtaining official permission to postpone his sailing date until Thursday, and he was staying secretly with Jimmie Rand, one of his college friends who owned an estate across the road from the English house.

We had to use the utmost caution, for we knew that Oliver had detectives trying to find me. Twice, they had even come to the house, asking for me. But Mr. English had ordered the servants to keep my presence an absolute secret. I didn't dare to step outside day or night, but there were plenty of secluded corners in the big house where Don and I could spend hours alone.

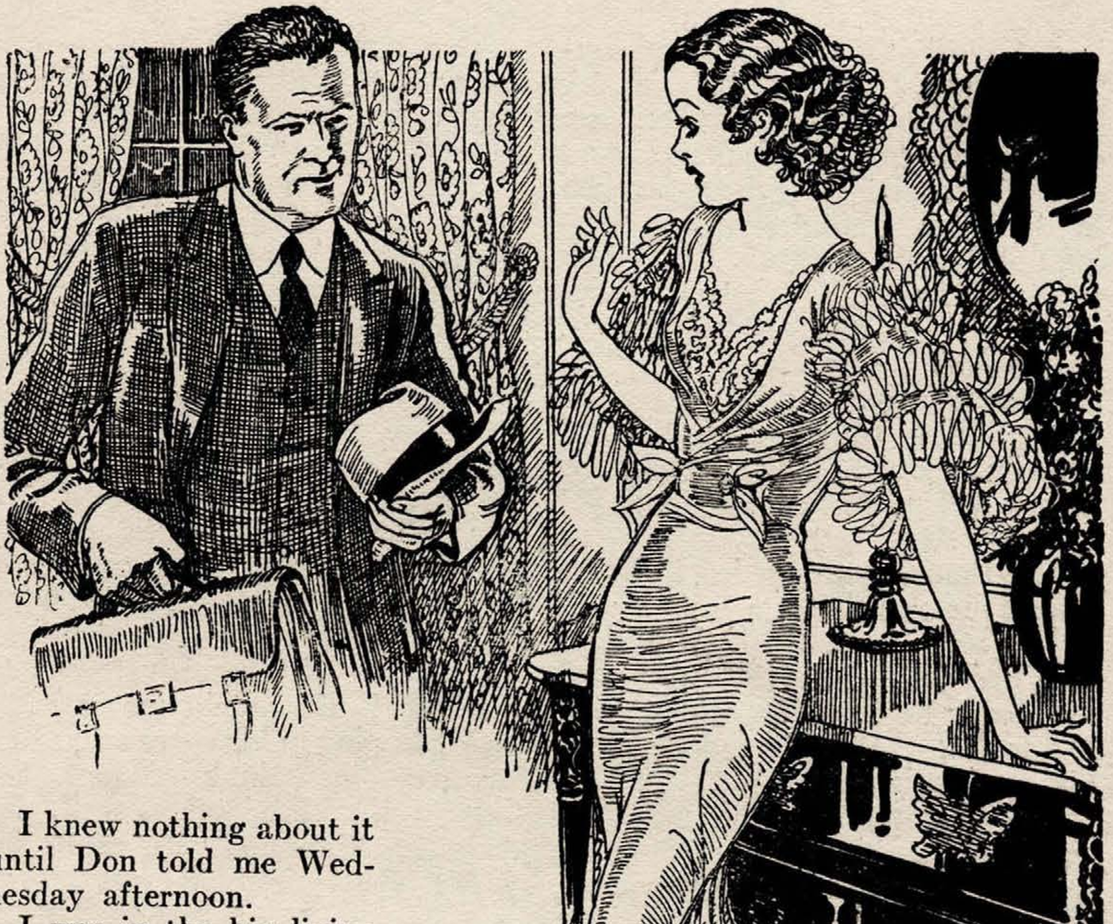
Hours filled with heart-hungry kisses. Hours that were dangerously sweet with clamorous, yearning impatience for the day when nothing on earth could keep us apart. Would Thursday never come? Every minute we were simply existing for the time to pass until I was legally free from Oliver's power to take me away from Don. Our nerves were tense, constantly on edge with anxiety that the torment of our waiting would not be futile.

Not that I hadn't plenty to do to help speed the days. It was taking all my ingenuity to get together some sort of a trousseau without being able to leave the house to shop, even if I had had enough money. Of course, Don insisted on furnishing everything I wanted, but I hated to let him buy my clothes before I was his wife. Anyway, I still had the hundred dollars I had earned in my mad attempt to get expelled from school and get to him.

My cheeks burned every time I thought of that afternoon in the mountain pool, but I refused to let it bother me. It would have been foolish to tell Don about it. What was the use for me to step down, even for a moment, from the high pedestal where his ideals had placed me? The incident would never have occurred if I hadn't been placed in such desperate circumstances which were entirely beyond my control, except to escape the best way I could. I told myself that every girl has things in her life that are unnecessary to tell her husband. And so I had simply explained to Don that I had run away from Hillcrest during a hiking trip. The details were nothing but a memory to be forgotten, a secret no one would ever know.

Nevertheless, I was thankful for the money, glad I hadn't had to spend any of it except a few dollars for a couple of cheap dresses to supplement the tweed suit I had worn from school. There was enough left to provide an astonishing amount of things at bargain prices which Don's mother managed to find for me on a couple of shopping trips to New York. There were two unbelievably cheap dinner dresses that looked all right at night, one of shiny black satin, smartly enough cut to be excellent for dining in public aboard ship, the other of white chiffon that made me feel and look like a bride. My traveling ensemble was of deep-green wool that made my skin lustrous white by contrast, and turned my hair to vivid gold under the small felt hat fashioned like a baby's bonnet.

This was to be my wedding attire, since we were going straight to the boat after the ceremony which, owing to the necessary secrecy of our plans, was to be performed in the presence of only the immediate household and a few close friends. Nevertheless, Don's mother and Mr. and Mrs. English were making as elaborate preparations as possible under the circumstances. And Jimmie Rand had quietly made arrangements for a smoker in Don's honor on Wednesday night.



"I've got something that'll interest you. A film that was taken in a pool in the woods. It's pretty hot stuff. I thought you wouldn't want your boy friend to see it, considering all the whoopee between you and the guy in the picture."

I knew nothing about it until Don told me Wednesday afternoon.

I was in the big living room, busy helping one of the maids decorate an improvised altar with ropes of smilax which Mrs. English had insisted on providing. The afternoon was unusually warm, and I had just opened the French window onto the terrace when I saw Don coming across the road from Jimmie's. The minute he stepped in through the open window where I stood waiting for him, I could tell he was fuming about something, after the maid had left us alone.

"I hadn't any idea there was going to be a smoker," he complained, "until Jimmie called up from town a moment ago and told me to watch for the fellow he's sending out to furnish the entertainment. I did my best to call it off, but Jimmie informed me that everything's set. A lot of our fraternity brothers are coming out from Philadelphia and New York, and several of the men in the State Department are coming up from Washington. So there's no possible way I can get out of going, since I'm the guest of honor. Do you mind very much, dear?" he asked anxiously.

"Of course I'll mind," I laughed ruefully. "But as long as it can't be helped, I'll go to bed early and get a beauty sleep."

"As though you needed it!" He caught me close in his arms. "You'll be the most beautiful little bride a man ever had, darling!" He buried his face in my hair, my throat, kissing me as though he could never kiss me enough.

Suddenly, just behind us, there was a step on the terrace. Startled, we drew apart in confusion. Then, with a gasp, I realized we had been off our guard just once too often. For a strange man was outside the window, a swarthy, beetle-browed individual who stood watching us curiously. How long he had been there I didn't know. I darted back of the curtain, trembling in terror as Don whirled on him.

"Well, what do you want?" he demanded shortly. "Why don't you go to the front door and ring the bell?"

The man shrugged. "What's the use of bothering? I heard your voices and I came around to see if this is Mr. Rand's place. I'm furnishing the entertainment for a smoker he's giving to-night."

"It's across the road," Don said briefly. "You go on over. I'll follow you in a minute."

With a mumbled "Thanks," the stranger went down the steps and across the lawns.

Don turned to me and pulled me from my hiding place. "Why, you're trembling like a leaf, dear!" he said anxiously.

"Oh, that man saw me!" I panted nervously. "I'm afraid he's a detective from Oliver!"

Don shook his head. "No, he's exactly what he said. I've seen him before at smokers, and I don't particularly like the type of entertainment he supplies, either. But it's Jimmie's party, so I have nothing to say. Well, I promised to show the fellow what's to be done in preparation, so I'll have to go now. I'll be back here after a while, but in the meantime I'm going to finish my packing so I'll be ready to sail tomorrow." He caught me close, his heart leaping in his eager eyes. "Tomorrow—just think of that, darling!" He kissed me, a swift, hot kiss that throbbed with exultation, a kiss that promised everything in life.

After he was gone I stood staring after him, my pulses leaping in pride for the lithe, handsome strength of his magnificent body as he strode across the road and disappeared in Jimmie's house. For a long time I stood there lost in dreams of the utter rapture waiting for us only a few hours ahead.

Of a sudden I realized I was not alone. With a violent start, I saw that the beetle-browed man had come up onto the terrace again, so softly that I hadn't heard him. He had left off his hat, and his close-clipped hair stood up over his bullet head like black bristling fur. He carried a bulging tan brief case, over which he was smiling at me. There was something in his furtive, swarthy face that sent a stab of unreasoning panic through me, in spite of what Don had said about him.

Frantically, I reached for the window to close it. But, with a quick, sinuous movement, he stepped forward and thrust his foot over the sill.

"Wait a minute, sister," he drawled in a voice of easy familiarity. "I've got something of yours that'll interest you in a big way."

I stared at him, my terror displaced by fury at his insolence. "You must be mistaken," I said coldly. "I never saw you before." I started to move away.

His lips twisted in a grin. "And I never saw you before, neither. But it's a lucky break for both of us I got my directions mixed and accidentally busted in here a while ago. The minute I saw you, I recognized you from your picture."

"My picture!" I stared at him, puzzled, suspicious. "I don't understand."

He tapped his bulging brief case. "I've got it right here in one of the films I'm going to show to-night at the smoker for Mr. Harrison. It was taken in a pool in the woods somewhere." He grinned knowingly.

I stepped back as though he had struck me in the face. My heart froze in my throat. In a flash, I realized what he meant, and a sickening wave of horror stabbed through me. Oh, it couldn't be true! Fate couldn't have twisted things like this!

"It's pretty hot stuff, you know," he added, his dark face a leering mask. "I thought you wouldn't want your boy friend to see it, considering all the whoopee between you and the guy in the picture."

"But there wasn't any one else in it!" I gasped, my heart hammering terrifically, my breath choking my throat. "Anyway, I don't believe you could recognize me—the camera was too far away!" I panted, desperately.

He leered darkly. "You're wrong on both counts, sister. The guy that made this film is good. He specializes in pictures for the smoker circuit. Maybe you didn't know it, but he must have got a shot at you before you knew he was there. Anyway there's enough close-ups of your face so that I recognized you. Even if he had another couple there for the regular acting and you doubled for the girl in the water, no one'll ever know that from the picture.

"The name of it is 'She Hung Her Clothes On A Hickory Tree,'" he said, watching me intently while my eyes dilated in horror as every word he uttered struck a death blow to my heart.

"Of course," he added insinuatingly, "if you don't want the film to be shown to-night, I can sell it to you."

I caught my breath sharply. "How much?" I panted.

"Well, it's a total loss to us that way." He rubbed his chin thoughtfully while I thought I'd go insane. "I'll make it one grand. One thousand bucks," he elucidated.

My heart sank sickeningly. "But I haven't that much!" I gasped. Then I remembered all the money I had earned from this wretched picture had gone for clothes for my trousseau, and a black mist clouded my brain. A horrible feeling of helplessness paralyzed me. I stared at him, mute with despair.

"Well, it's O. K. by me," he shrugged. "The film goes on to-night." He shifted his brief case and started to leave.

"No!" I cried sharply. "Wait!" I pressed my shaking hand over my aching eyes, my brain reeling desperately. What could I do? If only I could ask Don for the money!

But I shrank from taking the risk of shattering his illusions about me.

My thoughts flashed to the only other person I knew to ask for help. Oliver! He would have plenty of money. But I dared not go to him. He was still my guardian. He still had the power to stop the wedding.

Yet there would be no wedding if the picture was shown at the smoker, I told myself wretchedly. Not only would I be sure to lose Don! But with so many of his college friends there, together with his associates in the consular service, he would undoubtedly be dropped from his career with dishonor for having been engaged to a girl whose picture was featured in the smoker circuit!

My heart thumped miserably. Oh, I had to do something!

Desperately, I stared at the furtive eyes watching me. "There's only one way I can get you the money, only I can't get it to-day. To-morrow I'll be eighteen, and I'll come into what I've inherited from my father. I'll have to give you a note, due to-morrow. You can take it to my guardian then, and he'll have to pay you out of my money. There's only one thing——" I hesitated, in a panic of doubt and fear. But it was my only chance. "You'll have to promise not to get in touch with him until to-morrow. It wouldn't do you any good anyway. You wouldn't get your money till then. Besides, I—I'm hiding from him. He mustn't know where I am under any circumstances. I'll have to be sure of that before I give you his name."

"Oh, you can trust me, sister," the man vowed solemnly. "I've got no wish to get you in trouble, only these days you can't blame a guy for picking up a little money wherever he can. I promise you on anything you want to name that I won't go to your guardian till to-morrow. Why, I couldn't leave here before two or three o'clock to-night if I wanted to. The smoker will last that long, and between now and then I've got to rig up a screen and some sort of a projecting booth. No, this is on the level, see?" Then, as I hesitated uncertainly, he added: "Here's your film."

He took a round flat tin box from his brief case and held it so I could see the sticker on top while he pointed to the printed title: "She Hung Her Clothes On A Hickory Tree." Then, still keeping it tormentingly out of my reach, he opened the container and unwound several feet of film, holding it up to the light for me to see. One glance made my face burn with shame and dismay.

Frantically, I turned and ran across the room to the desk, snatching up a pen and a sheet of paper. In a frenzy of haste I wrote a note to Oliver, directing him to pay the bearer one thousand dollars, and dating it for the next day. The film peddler stood over me watching closely until he had the note in his greedy hands.

Another moment and he was gone, leaving the film coiled on the desk like a viper.

Frenziedly, I gathered it up in a blind panic to destroy it at once. Burn it! Burn it! My brain ordered desperately. I scarcely breathed for fear some one would pass me as I raced down to the basement, where after hunting frantically, I found some matches in a wall case above the laundry stove. A moment later, the wretched strip of celluloid vanished with a bright flare in the laundry tubs.

I was glad Don had to go to the smoker that night. It would give me a chance to be alone and compose my shattered nerves, which had turned dinner into a nightmare for me. It was almost more than I could do to laugh and talk naturally during the meal, but somehow I managed to keep up until Don left. As it was, he stayed with me until after ten, when he saw the cars beginning to arrive across the road.

Before he went, he held me close in his arms, whispering that this was the last night we'd ever have to be apart. I could feel his pulses leaping. His eyes, so blue and deep, were warm and glowing with his love for me, and my heart contracted thinking how narrowly I had escaped seeing them harden with scorn and contempt. But it was foolish to allow that thought to torture me now, I kept telling myself. Hadn't I burned the film with my own hands? Don could never in the world find out about it. It could never endanger our love again. His kisses, passionate and tender, calmed me, filled me with a sense of utter security. When he left, I was on fire with thrills because I knew I was the happiest girl on earth.

Shortly after I went up to my room, I heard the rest of the family retire for the night. But I didn't undress for bed just then. I had some last-minute packing to finish.

It must have been at least a half-hour later when I heard a tap on my door. Opening it, expecting to see Don's mother, I was surprised to find the housekeeper standing there.

"There's a man downstairs to see you, Miss Lynore," she said, a queer look on her stolid face.

"To see me!" I stared at her, and then I saw she was holding out a visiting card.

Uncertainly, I glanced at it—and gasped sharply. For the name engraved on it was Oliver Bennett.

An icy shudder cut through me. Oh, how could he have found me after I had eluded him this long! But he had, just as I had feared he would. I had known all along this might happen at any minute.

My heart drummed insanely in my ears. "Oh, I can't go down! Tell him I'm not here," I panted, and then I saw the housekeeper had turned the card over, so I could see the words written on the back in Oliver's familiar handwriting.

> I know you are here. If you see me at once, I'll not make any trouble. But if you refuse, I'll bring the police and force you to come with me. O. B.

For a frantic moment I wanted to run and hide, or rouse the household to protect me. But that would be madness. I knew he meant what he said about the police, and I had to prevent that at any cost. My only chance lay in making him see reason and let us alone. There was no other way out of it. I had to go down.

Weak with terror, I entered the living room a moment later.

Oliver was standing importantly in the center of the floor, a sly expression on his handsome, florid face. His thin lips spread in a smile as I stood trembling in the doorway.

"Ah, the little runaway in person!" he drawled. "Come in, child. Don't be afraid. I'm not going to kidnap you this time. Let us sit down and have a quiet little talk." He motioned toward the davenport. Slowly he sat down.

But I remained standing. "What do you want?" I faltered, searching his narrowed eyes, afraid to breathe.

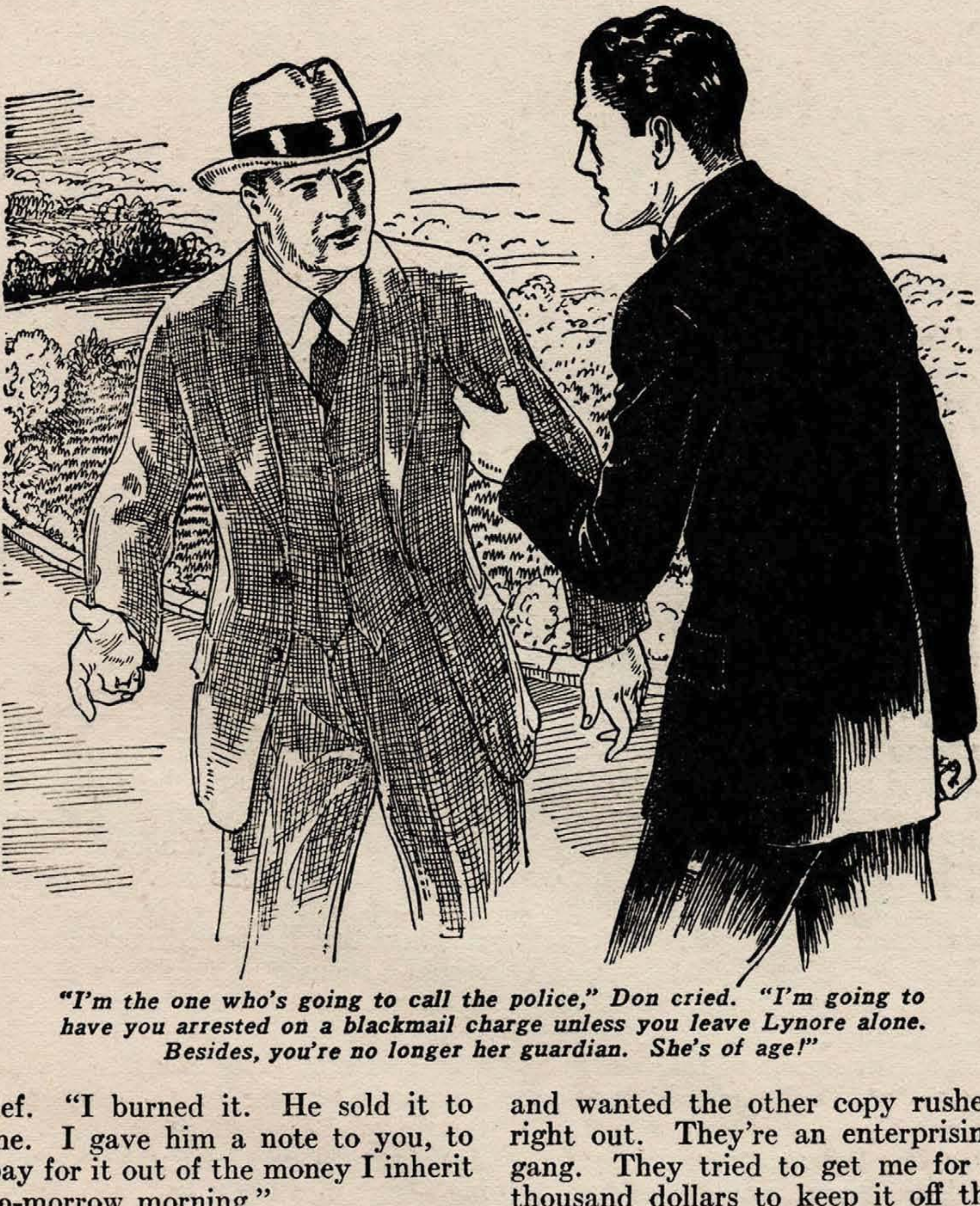
He raised his brows in a gesture he had always used when he had any one helpless in his power. "Well, first of all I want to congratulate

you on becoming a—shall we call it a film star?"

His words struck me like a bolt. I stared at him, my heart stopping. "How—how did you find out?" I stammered, reddening painfully, scarcely realizing what I said.

"I'll admit it was a surprise," Oliver chuckled, "after hunting you everywhere with detectives since you vanished from Hillcrest. I was just ready to believe you had drowned in the lake, until about an hour ago." He cleared his throat maddeningly. "I had a telephone call from a man who peddles films for smokers. He said he had just sent a film featuring you out to a stag party being given to-night for young Harrison. He thought that I, as your guardian, wouldn't want it shown."

My brain reeled sickeningly. Why hadn't I known the man would break his promise not to see Oliver before to-morrow! But I'd had to risk the chance in order to get the film from him. Then, suddenly, I remembered. "But he can't show the film!" I gasped, weak with re-



"I'm the one who's going to call the police," Don cried. "I'm going to have you arrested on a blackmail charge unless you leave Lynore alone. Besides, you're no longer her guardian. She's of age!"

lief. "I burned it. He sold it to me. I gave him a note to you, to pay for it out of the money I inherit to-morrow morning."

"I see." Oliver's eyes narrowed. "Then you did make the film! And they——" he paused, while a strange expression whipped across his face. "They made two copies."

"Oh, no!" I choked, my eyes dilating in horror.

He nodded, secretly smiling. "The man who called me said his partner had telephoned that something happened to the picture he had and wanted the other copy rushed right out. They're an enterprising gang. They tried to get me for a thousand dollars to keep it off the screen to-night. I've got an hour yet to hand over the money."

I pressed my hand against the pain in my throat. "Then you'll pay it?" I panted.

He shook his head. "Not unless you make it worthwhile, my dear."

"But I will," I moaned frantically. "I'll give you twice the money you advance! I'll give you every cent my father left me! Only pay it, Oliver!" I clutched at his arm in a frenzy of pleading.

He took my hand in his. "I will on one condition, Lynore," he said, his eyes glinting. "That you marry me at once."

I stiffened, and stared at him, appalled. In a suffocating flash I saw the hungry greed in his avid gaze, recognized it for what it was, for what it had been almost since I had lived in his home. And I had never dreamed it, even when he forbade my seeing other men! He had dared to think of me like this, even though he had a wife! I shrank away from him in revulsion.

But he caught me back against him, holding me in a grip of steel. "Don't look so horrified, Lynore," he said softly. "My wife died three weeks ago in the sanitarium. I've been waiting for it before I spoke to you like this. I've tried to keep you free so I could marry you. I've been mad about you ever since you began growing up." With a swift motion he tried to kiss me.

Blind with rage, I struck at his face. Desperately, I struggled against him. "Don't you dare touch me!" I panted. "I hate you. I wouldn't marry you for anything!"

He reddened violently. "Not even to save young Harrison from seeing that film?" he said harshly. "From the description I got, it would be plenty to turn him against you if he sees it, and he will see it, unless you promise right now to marry me."

My brain whirled as a black tide of hopeless despair engulfed me. It seemed my heart crashed and died inside my throat. What could I do? I closed my eyes in an agony of helpless panic.

"You'd better make up your mind," Oliver was purring in my ear. "The film goes on in just a few minutes. If you want me to buy it for you, you'll come with me now. I'll leave a check across the road, then we'll go to a magistrate and be married."

As I stared at him, a sudden desperate hope flamed through my brain. There might be just the barest chance I could outwit him.

I lowered my eyes. "Well, all right," I said, very low. "I'll get my coat."

I was afraid he wouldn't release me. But he did. Evidently, he was surprised at my sudden meekness. He stood in the doorway watching me with glittering eyes while I went upstairs.

The instant I reached the second floor, I began running silently along the thickly carpeted corridor until I reached the servants' stairs. A moment later I was hurrying through the dark kitchen, letting myself out the back door. As I ran silently over the grass around the end of the house I could see Oliver through the lighted living room windows, impatiently pacing the floor. Madly I sped across the road to Jimmie's, skirting the lighted drive until I reached a clump of shrubbery at the entrance.

The door stood open. Laughing voices of men drifted out to me as I crouched there in the shadows, trembling. Then they hadn't gone down yet! I could hear them moving about in a room to the right of the hallway, beyond a wide doorway half concealed with draperies. And right outside that room was a wrought-iron stairway, with a flight underneath leading down! Did it lead to the recreation room? And could I make it without being seen? I had to!

Heart in my mouth, I slipped noiselessly inside, past the door without being seen, and down the steps. A moment later, I found myself descending into what was unmistakably, the recreation room. Stooping cautiously, I could see a white screen hung at the far end. And near the foot of the steps was a little boxlike booth. Some one was in it, and as I crouched there, watching breathlessly, the swarthy film peddler suddenly came out of it. He walked, slowly, over to the screen and adjusted it. Then he went out through a doorway behind it.

Like a silent flash, I was down the stairs and in the tiny wooden booth. I nearly knocked over a film projector on a little table, in my eagerness to open a bulging tan brief-case lying beside it. Hands shaking, I opened it, and commenced drawing out the contents. One after another round tin box I examined in mad haste until, at the very last, I realized it wasn't there. My heart knocked sickeningly. Desperately, I looked about, saw a small package lying on the chair. Wildly I tore off the wrapping just enough to see it was another film. And the title on the top was "She Hung Her Clothes On A Hickory Tree"!

Snatching it up breathlessly, I slipped out of the booth. Under the stairs I saw a table piled high with smoking supplies, and I caught up a paper of matches as I shot up the stairs—just as heavy feet reëntered the room from the far end. As I reached the entrance hall, some one parted the draperies in the wide doorway, but I didn't stop. I didn't even look. Like a hunted animal I raced out into the driveway.

Swift feet pounded after me, and my heart knocked sickeningly. I couldn't get away! But I could destroy the film.

Madly I fled around the house, tearing open the tin box as I ran. In an instant I had the film free. I caught the end of the strip and flung the spool to the ground, unraveling it completely in a glittering heap on the gravel. Stooping swiftly, I lighted one of the paper matches and touched it to the celluloid. There was a bright flare in the darkness just as a tall figure came running around the house.

"Lynore!" It was Don, his voice thin with amazement. "What are you doing over here, dear?"

I couldn't speak. My throat was dry, burning miserably. I turned and stared at him, panting, pressing my hand against my heart as he came up to me.

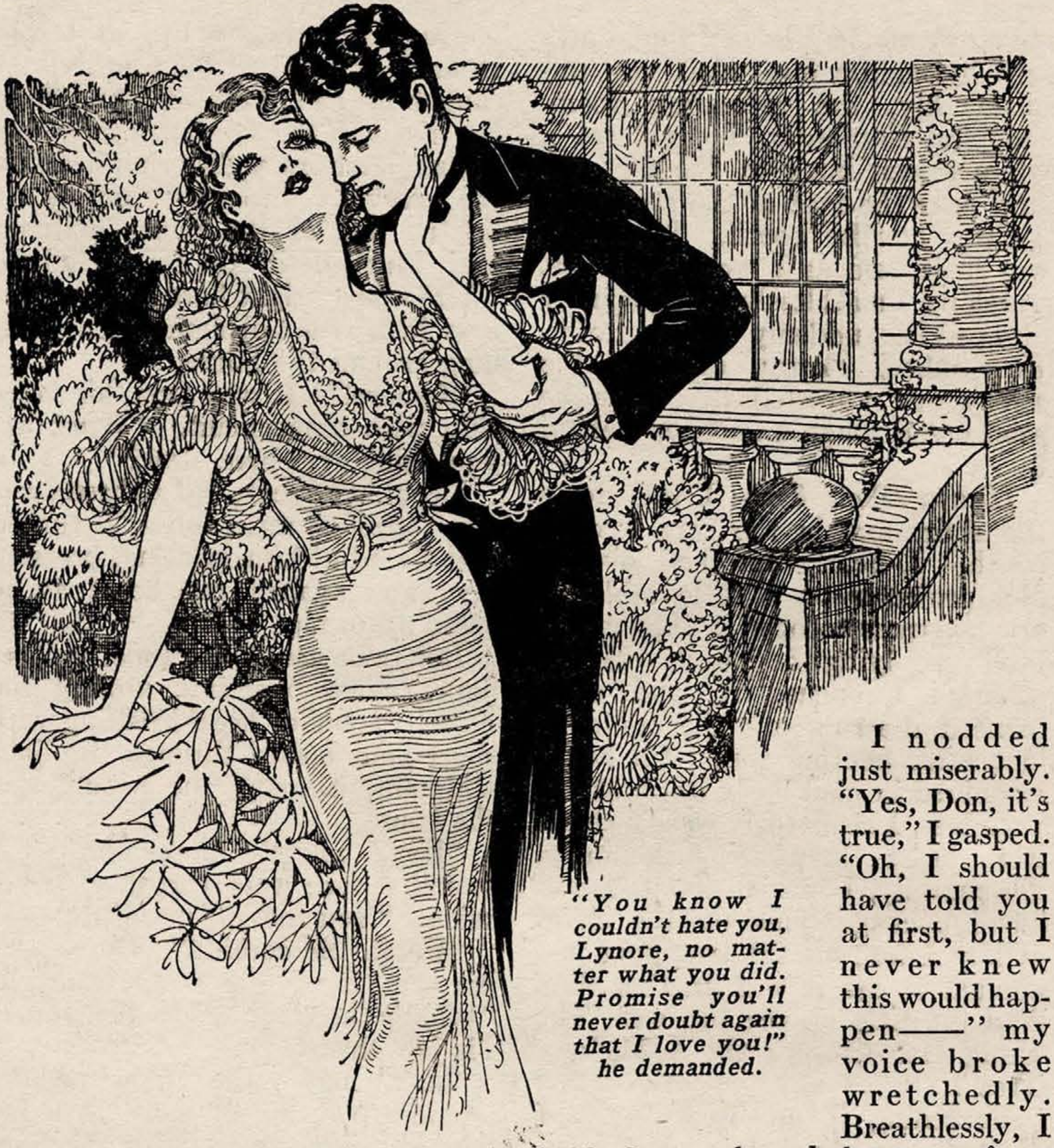
Before he could touch me, another figure came pounding around the drive. A bullet head bristling with short hair flashed through the light streaming through the windows in the house.

"Hey, where's that film!" A swarthy face was thrust close to mine. "You took it, you little——"

"Here! Be careful!" Don seized his arm, flung him away from me. "What's the trouble?" he demanded, his jaw thrust out.

"Ask her!" the film peddler snarled, pointing at me. "Ask her why she just stole one of the films out of the projection booth I was going to show at the smoker! Oh, so you burned it already!"

Stooping, he picked up the charred spool on which the film had been wound from the center of a black smudge on the driveway. Angrily, he whirled on me again. "Say, do you think you can get away with that, even if you did pull the wool over this guy's eyes?" he laughed harshly. "It's a big pity he can't see you in that film. It's the hottest number we've ever had on the circuit. Well, any time you



"You know I couldn't hate you, Lynore, no matter what you did. Promise you'll never doubt again that I love you!" he demanded.

want to make some more money, diving in your birthday suit, come around!" He turned and strode toward the house.

Don flinched as though he had been struck. For a moment, there was tense silence as he turned to me, his eyes sick.

"It isn't true, is it, Lynore?" he demanded, his voice hoarse. "Tell me it's a lie, and I'll kill him."

My brain whirled frantically. But I knew it was useless to lie out of it. It would only make it more hopeless, if it ever came to light again.

I nodded just miserably. "Yes, Don, it's true," I gasped. "Oh, I should have told you at first, but I never knew this would happen——" my voice broke wretchedly. Breathlessly, I sobbed out the whole story, from the minute I had vowed to be expelled from Hillcrest Manor, until to-night when I had discovered there had been a copy of the original film which I had bought for a thousand dollars.

"Oh, Don, tell me you understand!" I begged, my heart hammering painfully. "Tell me you don't hate me!"

But he turned away. His face white, set, he strode off around the driveway without another word.

My mind went black. In that moment I wanted to die. Blindly, I stumbled across the lawns, sobbing miserably. I had lost Don, irretrievably. All his tender, worshiping love had turned to scorn and hate. There was nothing for me in life but to get away quickly, spare us both the humiliation of ever seeing each other again. Gropingly, I started to run—— And found myself seized in a rough grasp.

"So you tried to sneak away!" It was Oliver, angrily confronting me. "You'll see how far that gets you! I won't pay for the film now."

"Oh, the film's burned!" I gasped. "And Don knows the whole thing. It's turned him against me. I hope you're satisfied." Weeping bitterly, I pulled away.

"Sure, I'm satisfied." With a soft laugh, he pinned me against him. "I'm glad we're rid of him, then he won't try to interfere. Because you and I are getting married to-night."

"Oh, no you're not!" spoke a deep young voice that made my heart leap. Looking up incredulously, I saw Don striding over the grass toward us. "But you are getting out of here, quick, unless you want to get hurt!" His hands clenched threateningly as he faced Oliver. "Take your hands off Lynore!"

Oliver drew himself up importantly. "Indeed not," he retorted, holding my struggling arm more tightly. "I'm her guardian. She's leaving with me to-night, if I have to call in the police."

"I'm the one who's going to call in the police," Don cried. "I'm going to have you arrested on a blackmail charge—you and that film peddler downstairs, unless both of you leave Lynore alone. Besides, you're no longer her guardian." He held out his watch. "It's five minutes after twelve. She's of age!"

A blinding wave of light seemed to free my soul. My heart began beating so fast I thought I was going to faint. Dimly, I was aware that Oliver was glaring at his watch. Then, with a grunt, and a fearful look at Don, he turned and almost ran out to the road. A moment later, we heard the sound of his car vanishing in the night.

"Lynore!" With a low cry, Don's arms were about me. "Lynore, darling, you're free! Nothing can ever take you away from me again!"

I stared up at him, scarcely breathing. "Then you don't hate me!" I whispered, trembling. "I thought, when you went into the house——"

"Oh, darling, I went in to warn that fellow not to spread the story around about that film. He'll never bother you again, neither he nor Oliver. They both know they've laid themselves open to serious charges." Don held me close, his eyes shining above mine with a tender, glowing light. "You know I couldn't hate you, Lynore, no matter what you did. Tell me you know that, darling!"

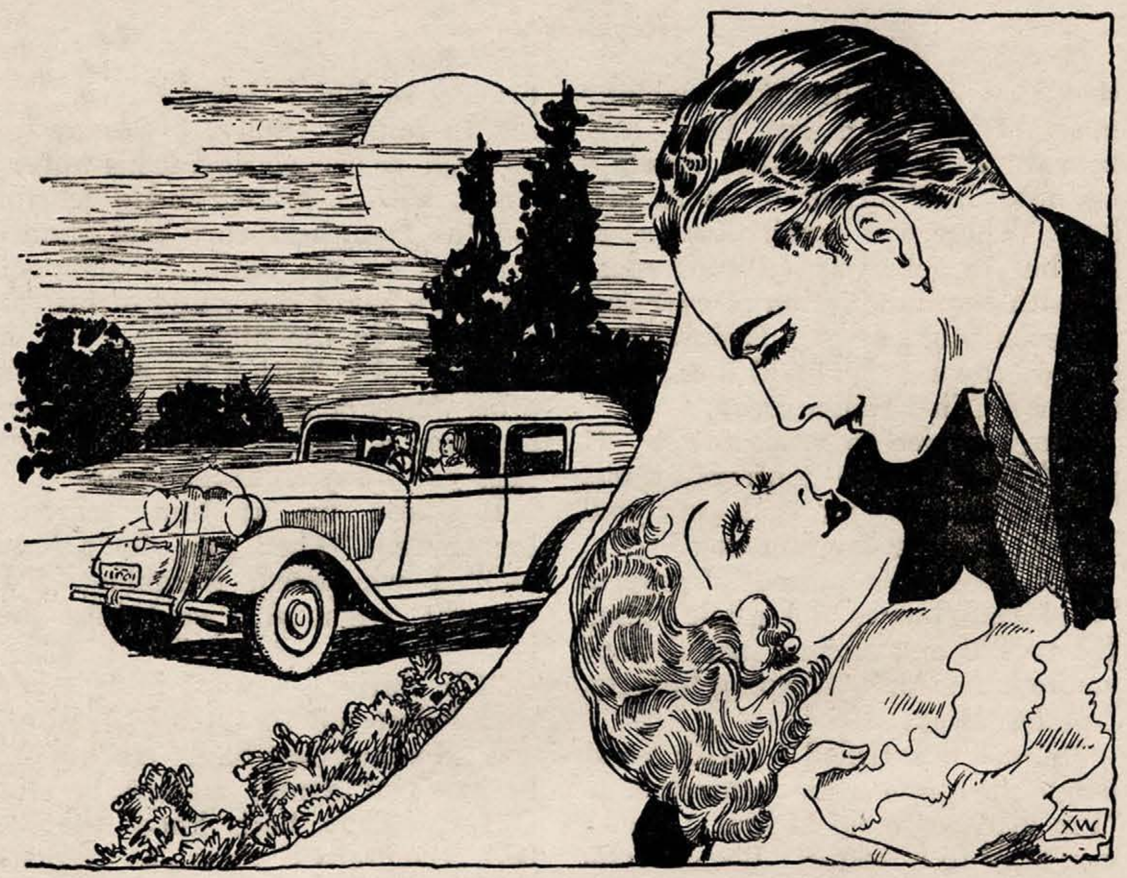
I looked up at him, a wave of joy drowning my heart in ecstasy.

"Oh, yes!" I whispered tremulously. "I know it, Don."

A moment longer he held me so I had to meet his eyes. "Promise you'll never doubt again that I love you—love you—love you!" he demanded.

But he didn't give me a chance to answer. His lips smothered the words on my mouth while his arms crushed me close against his heart in a mad, exultant embrace.

And as we clung together in breathless surrender to our love, while the world stood hushed, stilled, it seemed that tiny silver bells of joy chimed in our thudding hearts, ringing in the new day. Our wedding day.



The Love Pawn

By Hortense McRaven

PAULA had never been kidnaped before, and the sensation wasn't a pleasant one. She had often wondered how it would feel; now, she knew. Stolen, and only a week before her wedding to Monty Lewis!

She glanced again at the grim stranger who had kidnaped her in her own car, and tried to imagine how he felt, also. A young fellow like that, really good-looking, must be goaded by some terrific strain, driven by some desperate need, to take such a chance. What suffering had etched those bitter lines in his hard, handsome face?

Half an hour earlier, Paula had hurried from Madame Rosalie's, where she had been fitted with the last ermine bordered velvet, and the wispy bits of chiffon lingerie which were part of her luxurious trousseau. Stowing a flat box away in her sedan, she had glanced up to see this young fellow, with breathtaking nerve, step out from behind a truck on the crowded street, jump into her car beside her, and order tersely, "Drive out to highway 80!"

Paula obeyed. What else could she do with an automatic suggestively touching her side?

"If it's money you want," she

gasped, looking desperately about for help, "my uncle Jerry will pay you any amount! My uncle or my fiancé would do that," she continued, her tawny-brown eyes flashing furiously, "but *I* wouldn't!" She took one hand from the wheel, to snap her fingers under the man's nose. "I'd never give in! I'd refuse to traffic with your kind!"

"Fine!" exclaimed her kidnaper, amazingly." I knew you were that kind, spirited and nervy, when I selected you to help me in a plan I've got! You might call me 'Red'—with a gesture toward his hair which flamed in the sunlight—"because we're going to know each other pretty well before we get through with this thing. Of course, I know you're Paula Ingram!"

Sheer surprise made Paula drive on, down a busy street, past two unsuspecting traffic cops. Her captor's voice echoed in her ears with a familiar ring. Where had she heard it before? He was not at all the criminal type. He was well dressed, his hands cared for, his teeth nice. And he would have been splendidly attractive, but for those harsh lines about his mouth, that terrible look in his slate-gray eyes.

The whole thing was almost absurd, it seemed so natural—yet so horrid! She drove on, through business streets, residential districts, out to the open country. Twice, they passed people she knew; one, a car full of girls who had been with her at a luncheon in her honor, that very day! They waved at her. If she should scream, now——

"No squealing!" ordered the deadly voice at her elbow. She could feel the cold steel of the revolver through her dress. "Let your friends think you're taking a ride with a new date!"

A new date!

"You must be crazy!" she said, her eyes flashing. "You will never get away with this, you poor, puny thing! I almost feel sorry for you when I think of the money and power my guardian, Uncle Jerry, will put behind a search for me!"

"There will be no search," said the man who called himself "Red," calmly. "I've fixed that. We leave the car at Philadelphia, and I'm taking you by airplane to Santa Barbara, California."

The countryside through which they were passing swam dizzily past Paula. To California from Wilmington, Delaware! To Santa Barbara, her city of recollections, the home of a man she wanted to forget!

Red coolly relaxed, even lighted a cigarette. "You are the girl who is to help me take some money from the bank there!"

"Help you rob a bank! I'll die first!" defied Paula's vivid, mutinous lips. "You—you can't force me to do that!"

"Yet I have a hunch that you will. And my hunches seldom fail." He seemed so sure, that chills ran through Paula. "It won't be exactly robbery. Not from my point of view. Drive slowly, and let me tell you a little story. My name is Jack Delafield. Five years ago, my father was one of the wealthiest men in southern California. Then, on the market, he lost all except a quarter of a million. A lot of money for some people, but little enough when you've had more. A group of hard-boiled thieves in tailored clothes, four men who pretended to be friends, fleeced dad completely. Deliberately, murderously, took his last cent. It wasn't only the money, but his power, his name, all gone. One windy night, he came home to find just one bullet in his revolver. It was enough. He sent it through his heart. Six months later, mother died, crushed. I faced the world alone. I had worshiped my dad, and"—the slate gray eyes brooded, bitterly—"I swore I'd have my revenge, and got that money, *my* money, back! Oh, I tried the law, but it was no use. The gang had covered the evidence. And they're still at the same old game, robbing whenever they can. Now I've a chance to burn them up! Danger means nothing to me!"

Paula felt a swift stab of pity. Young and so desperate!

"I've laid my plans well." He was staring unseeingly at the town they were whizzing past. "The gang is operating in Mexico, with blinds in California. I've learned, no matter how, that almost the exact sum they stole from us, will be in this bank in Santa Barbara for a few hours some day soon, until it can be divided. I'm going to get that money—*mine*—or die for it!"

In spite of herself, Paula felt a thrill of excitement. She loved to live daringly, scent danger in the air. And with this handsome bandit—— Her head, with its gold-brown hair flying, was up, her delicate nostrils wide.

"Where do I come in on this?" she asked swiftly.

"You are to be nice to the cashier of that bank, find out which day the money will be there. You are the only girl in the whole world who can do that, because Eric Kendall is in love with you!"

Paula almost lost control of the wheel. "No," she cried furiously. "Not Eric Kendall! I won't do it! So that is the bank, and Eric——"

"Oh, but you will!" Red broke in masterfully. "A year ago, you visited in Santa Barbara, and Eric fell madly in love with you. You had a wonderful time together. You seemed to care for him. Remember?"

Remember? She could see Eric's blond head and broad shoulders, his well-groomed air of the prosperous young business man. There had been tennis tournaments and horse races at the smart country club, the green strips of sward, sun shining, pennants flying from the grandstand; herself in a white dress with orange coat, the breeze on Eric's hair. Dances, too, in the open air pavilion, the feel of Eric holding her close, the perfume of thousands of California's sensuous carnations, and Eric making love to her, begging her passionately to stay and marry him. Yes, Eric was attractive, and with his bold, complacent way, would be successful.

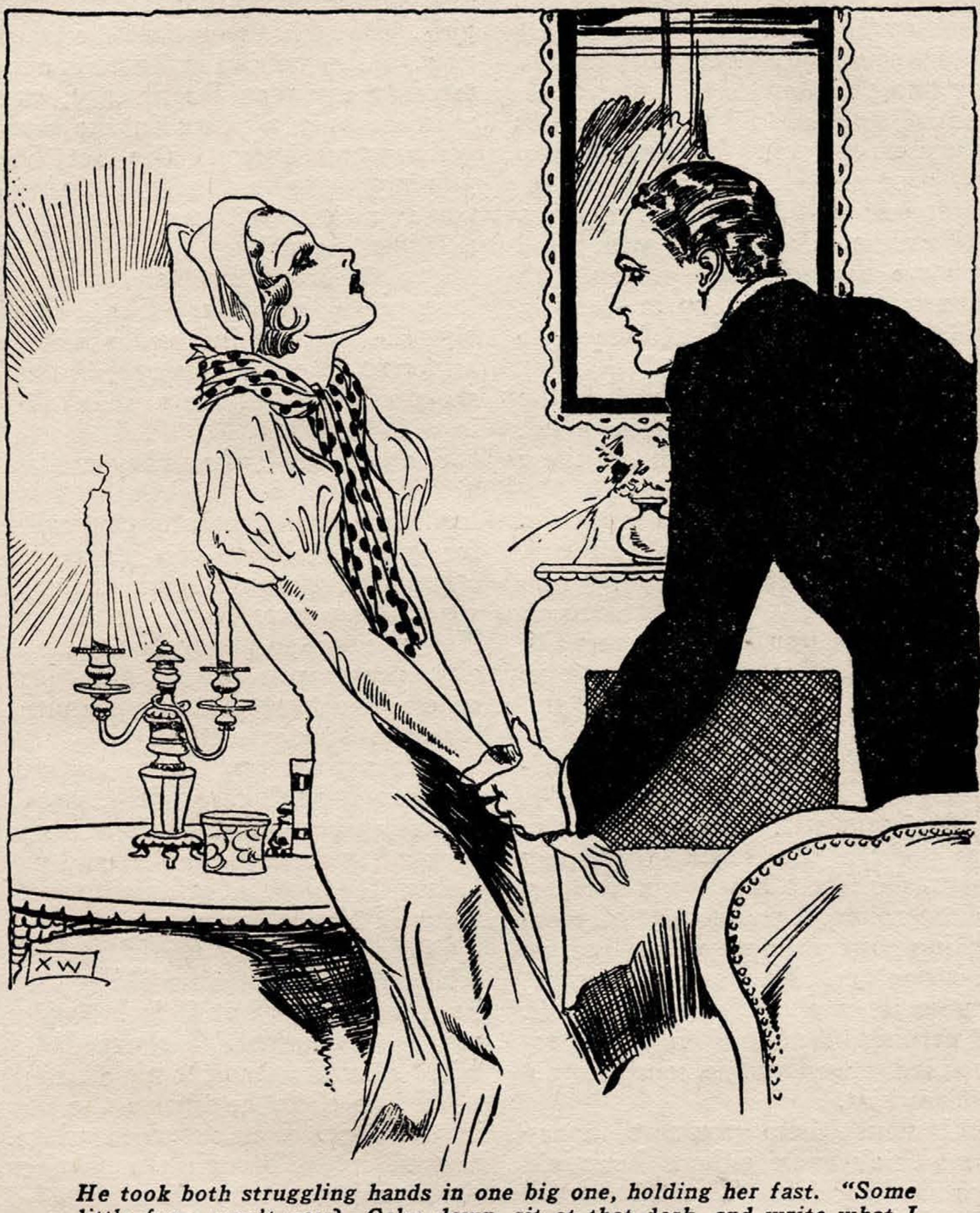
"You're thinking of him now," said Red, as if he read her mind. "When you see him again, the affair may click. You ran away from him last year, you came home to marry the millionaire, Monty Lewis, to please your uncle. But you don't love Monty; he doesn't stir you! Not exciting enough. You're secretly longing for some one else!"

Paula gasped. How did he know all this?

"I did want to please Uncle Jerry. He has done everything for me!"

"Sure." The strange slate-gray eyes looked into hers. "But if you had really loved Eric, as a girl like you is capable of loving, you wouldn't have thought of that! You would have gone straight as a die to your man!"

What a strange conversation with a bandit who had kidnaped her! Talking of love! And yet, with his fascinating, compelling eyes, and the lines almost gone from his face, he could have been a lover worthy of any girl, if fate had dealt with him differently.



He took both struggling hands in one big one, holding her fast. "Some little fury, aren't you? Calm down, sit at that desk, and write what I dictate."

"This isn't getting us anywhere," she said angrily, shaking off his spell. "You'll be clapped in jail as soon as I am missed, and that won't be long now!"

"But you won't be missed. Just before I picked you up, I sent a wire to your uncle. It read, 'Monty and I decided could not stand big formal wedding. Married to-day at two o'clock. En route to California in my car. Paula.' "

Ah-h, he *was* clever!

"Think you're smart, don't you?" she cried. "But Monty has gone on a hurried business trip to Canada, not to return till the day before the wedding."

"I know that. That played into my hand. Monty's trip was confidential, and he told no one he was going, except you. You intended to tell your uncle to-night, but by to-night you and I will be far away. Meanwhile, Uncle Jerry will think you are having a honeymoon with Monty, and Monty, up in Canada, will think you are safe at home. So no one will search for you!"

Shakily, Paula kept the car in the road. "Who are you?" she cried. "And how did you learn all these things?"

The man only laughed tauntingly. Then he said with that strange, ringing voice that kept echoing deep within Paula, "When we reach Philadelphia, you are going to write a note to Uncle Jerry in your own handwriting, saying you are safe and happy!"

"I shan't!" cried Paula rebelliously. "You shan't make me!"

"But you will!" he said. Again, Paula had the feeling of being driven by fate. It was not the gun he had; more, it was some odd, compelling power, the way his look bore down on her. He was a strong, determined man. Paula knew it. Something feminine in her responded, even while she fought against him.

"I shan't help you get money from Eric's bank, either!" her vivid lips mocked him. "If you think I'll use his love for me to lure that information from him, you'll find I can struggle to the last ditch!"

"You are beautiful when you flame like that," he said suddenly. "I like a girl with temper, you precious little wild cat!"

"Then you'll have plenty of chances to admire me!"

He leaned nearer. "I could," he said slowly, "if I were interested in girls. But I have no time for them now. All my mind and soul is centered in my plan for revenge, and you are only a pawn in the dangerous game I play! The fact that you happen to be a pretty little love pawn means nothing, absolutely nothing, to me!"

Paula's brows knotted. Only a love pawn, was she? She'd show him she had a mind and a will of her own. She didn't know yet what she would do, but she wouldn't fall in with his plans.

She was tired when they arrived at Philadelphia at nightfall. They had made good time, stopping twice for gas, but always at such remote filling stations that Paula knew it would be useless to try to escape. Now she was so weary, the maze of city streets was all a blur. Red ordered her to stop at an apartment house in a quiet section.

"It's a walk up," he apologized, but Paula didn't care. It was good to stretch her limbs. Only when he took a key from his pocket and unlocked the door of a small apartment did she wake up.

"This is sketchily furnished from odds and ends left after our crash," he was saying, "but it is home for me for the present. Welcome, lady fair! We will spend the night here."

With a click, he turned the key in the lock. Paula turned white. Locked in! Through the window she could see cavernous walls of other apartments, windows, more windows, and behind them, people were living, but who would hear her, or care, if she called? She was trapped!

Red put out his hand to take her coat, but in spite of his gun, she struck at him furiously. "You brute," she sobbed, between set teeth, "how dare you bring me here?

Before I'd let you touch me, I'd kill myself!"

He took both struggling little hands in one big one, holding her fast. "But, Paula——"

"You think you can hold me," she panted, "but I'll show you. I'm strong."

"Be quiet," he ordered. "I keep trying to tell you, you misunderstand. If you behave yourself, I'm not going to harm you. We are not alone. I have two Japanese servants who stayed with me when dad's establishment broke up. Anyway," he said coolly, "do you think I'd risk ruining my well-laid plans for you—a girl? Even if you are beautiful!" he added, with a queer look at the red mark she had left on his wrist. "Some little fury, aren't you? Calm down, sit at that desk, and write what I dictate."

Strangling her sobs, Paula stepped proudly across the worn, but once good rug. Automatically, she noticed the tasteful chintz, the few pieces of well polished furniture. He knew good things. His words kept ringing through her mind, "Even if you are beautiful." She did not know whether she was glad or sorry that he had taken his strange touch away from her.

Better not resist. Better pretend to fall in with his plans. Later, she could think of a way to escape. She wrote what he dictated, that she was on her honeymoon, that she was gloriously happy.

Red took the letter from her forcefully, and tore it up.

"You have disguised your hand," he said sternly. "Write another!"

The room swaying about her, she obeyed, too worn to wonder how he had known. But there was one more chance. She remembered a game she used to play with Uncle Jerry. When she had been in a very strict boarding school, where her letters were corrected, she always signed them with a special little crook to her name, so he would know she was in some childish trouble. She wrote it that way now, hoping, praying Uncle Jerry had not forgotten.

"Doesn't seem exactly right yet," said Red critically. "But let it pass."

He rang, and gave orders to the Japanese, "Phone the garage to send for Miss Paula's car, and store it for a week. See that this letter gets off at once by air mail. And tell Yugi San to come here."

When the tiny woman pattered in, she looked so much like a wee *Madame Butterfly* in her native kimono, that Paula almost said, "What a darling maid!" But she would not let herself praise Red's establishment.

"Make Miss Paula comfortable in the guest room," he ordered smoothly. "Dinner in an hour."

Both Yugi San and her husband, Koti, seemed to speak so little English, and they looked at their master with such doglike devotion that Paula realized it would be useless to appeal to them for help.

"Perhaps you would like to dress for dinner," Red was saying suavely. He handed Paula the box of clothes from her car. How strange the black box with its gold letters, "Rosalie," looked here!

In the tiny guest room, she decided not to dress. But on second thought, why not? Why not give this disdainful young bandit who had no place for girls in his life an eyeful?

Standing at last in the long, severe dress of heavy white faille which incased her form like the unopened sheath of a lily bud, her eyes gleamed mischievously. She was beautiful and she knew it. Dismissing Yugi San, she turned proudly before the mirror, kicking aside the fascinating little fishtail train that swept the floor. The gown was demurely high in front, but low to the vanishing point in the back, revealing the smooth shoulders that hours with dancing masters and on horseback had given her. From head to foot she was chastely white, not a hint of color except her own gold-brown hair and carmine lips. She stretched luxuriously, loving the feel of the stiff silk on her ivory body, wondering how certain slate-colored eyes would look when they saw her.

There was a little cough at the door.

"Dinner is served, Miss Paula." She jumped in amazement. A tall, black-haired butler stood there, immaculate in evening clothes.

"Benson!" Paula rushed to him in surprise. Benson, the substitute butler who had worked in her home when the regular man was ill.

That strange ringing voice that sometimes cracked like a whip, sometimes stroked her like a caress! The puzzle which her mind had been trying to solve was suddenly clear.

"You, Red, and the butler, Benson, are the same! You got that place in my home just to find out about me. Thinking you a servant, I never looked at you closely, but now I know! But the red hair——"

"A red wig is the best disguise I know," he said. "People hardly look further than that. And I know lots about you. I've watched you come and go, listened to your telephone conversations. I've seen you going reluctantly to Monty Lewis's arms, and take his kisses coldly."

"Ah," said Paula, "you cad!"

"Forgive me. All part of my game." He stepped close to the taut little figure in the beautiful stiff dress, and his glance appraised her charm.

"You don't love him," he said coolly. "You will never go back to him. Oh, I've seen you, in all sorts of garbs, in riding breeches, in lacy negligee. I've stood so close beside your chair when you dined, I could have laid my lips to your quivering shoulder." The strange thrilling voice was caressing now. "And I've had intimate glimpses, through half-opened doors of you, all dewy from sleep, cuddling against satin pillows for your breakfast in bed."

Dazed, a warm riot of feeling coursing through her, Paula stood, powerless to move while he placed his hand, tinglingly magnetic, on the silky smoothness of her bare back. Two pair of eyes, startled, looked into each others. For a long moment, they stood thus.

"You see, I could have kidnaped you for quite another reason, if I let myself go. But my will shuts women out. Getting that money back is my one obsession!" His voice cracked again. He took his hand away, leaving Paula shivering.

"After the job is over, you will be safe. No one will suspect you. And I shall disappear over the Mexican border. I know a place where neither car nor plane can follow. With a fast horse under me, and a jingle of spurs, I'll be gone, and you —you will find Eric's arms waiting for you. Eric is a handsome blond devil, after all."

After all! A little drearily, Paula's heart echoed the words. She could do worse, she thought, reluctantly tearing her glance from the dashing Red. At least, Eric would always have money to take care of her, and if he asked her again to marry him, under a golden California moon——

"Righto!" cried Red. "You're thinking of Eric, and Eric's love."

A chime of dainty bells sounded.

"Shall we go in to dinner, milady?" Gravely, Red offered his arm, gravely, Paula took it. A small table was set in the living room.

The hour that followed left its impress on Paula for life. Dining opposite a charming man in impeccable clothes, one who had once belonged to the world she know, it was hard to believe he had brought her here by force. It must be true that he was Jack Delafield. She had heard of the family, remembered vaguely that they had lost their money somehow.

Obviously, he was used to playing host. His ringing voice told her delightful things, and her laugh tinkled out. It was a delicious situation, with just a spice of danger. He had told her he did not want her, yet she wondered if his eyes did not tell a different tale.

The maid pattered to and fro with enticing foreign dishes; and the three red roses she had arranged with the artistic skill of the Japanese slowly opened in the warmth of the room like hearts of love, baring their voluptuous breasts to the kiss of the candlelight.

Paula and Red sat long over coffee and cigarettes, until at last the candles burned low. The harsh lines were almost erased from his face, giving him a different look. What a shame, Paula was thinking, for a man like this to be drawn into crime! She felt an intense longing to help him, save him from himself. If she pretended to fall in with his plans, surely some way would be opened up to stop him from this awful thing!

Something of what she was thinking must have showed in her face. With his usual clairvoyance, he put his hand forcefully on hers.

"Don't get the idea of reforming me. I'm not worth it, and there's no use."

The lines came back to his face. He crushed out his cigarette.

"You are tired," he said abruptly. "Time for bed."

Uneasiness laid hold on her again. It was so quiet there; perhaps he had sent the servants away. Perhaps she was alone with him.

"Afraid?" he accused. "Must I explain again that although you are a prisoner, you are entirely safe with me? Yugi San is already asleep on her pallet in your room."

"You"—faltered Paula, trust in him rushing over her. "You are nice. Good to me. I'll never be afraid of you again!"

The city was dimmed by a light fog when they got away the next morning. Red's plane was ready at the airport, and Yugi San and Koti looked like dwarfs in their funny leather jackets and goggles. Paula could have called for help again and again as they crossed the city, but something stopped her. She told herself with a hammering heart that she didn't want to go back on Red. She wanted to see this thing through!

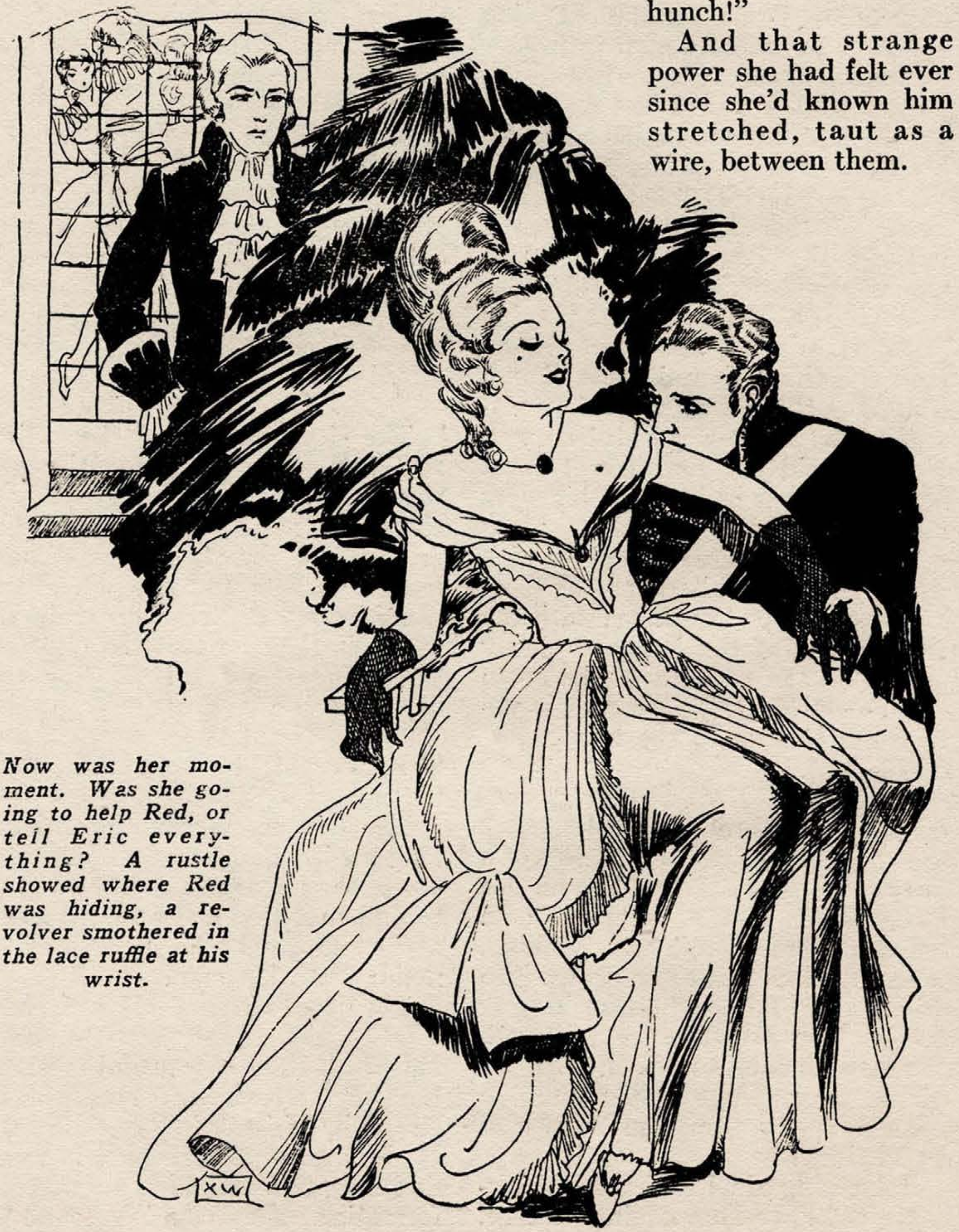
The trip across country was one long thrill. Paula was not surprised when they reached Santa Barbara to find that Red had engaged rooms at a quiet hotel. Yugi San was her maid; Koti, his man.

Then Red outlined his final plans. That night, there was to be a masked ball, at a beautiful resort on the beach. He had gotten cards, for he still had friends in Santa Barbara. Paula was to go with him, in mask, find Eric, flirt with him, get what information she could about the money. Red needed to know the exact day it was to be in the bank. On the actual day of the hold-up, she was to gain entrance by a side door, just before opening time, counting on Eric letting her in, then manage to keep his attention until Red did his work. Red had learned that Eric was the only officer who kept a gun in his desk. He kept telling Paula they must not fail now, must not!

"Suppose I refuse to do all this?" she asked her eyes flashing.

"You won't refuse," he said quietly, his eyes compelling. "I know. I have another hunch!"

And that strange power she had felt ever since she'd known him stretched, taut as a wire, between them.



Now was her moment. Was she going to help Red, or tell Eric everything? A rustle showed where Red was hiding, a revolver smothered in the lace ruffle at his wrist.

The ball was in full swing that night when a tall cavalier in plum-colored satin, buckled shoes and powdered wig, with a languishing lady in bouffant Dresden flowered taffeta on his arm, presented their cards at the exclusive club. The costumes were rented from an agency, but what did that matter? Under the crystal shaded candles, they glittered and shone. The polished floors were crowded and excitement made Paula's breath come fast. Where in all that throng was Eric?

Soon she spotted him, resplendent in black velvet with rhinestone ornaments. No disguise could hide his complacent bearing, the blue eyes that had always been a little shrewd. She managed to slip into his arms.

"Eric," she whispered mysteriously, "are you glad to see me?"

He started violently. "Who are you?"

"Don't you know my perfume of jasmine flowers, Eric?"

"Paula!" He held her closer. "Where did you drop from?"

"From the skies! Literally! Brought here by a young hero who swept me off my feet."

"Where is Monty Lewis?"

"In Canada," Paula replied calmly. "I've left him. I'm never going back."

"Darling!" His voice grew thick. Paula noticed he had grown stouter since she'd seen him, and the blue eyes were shrewder.

"Come outside," he was saying, "so we can talk."

Trailing through the door on Eric's arm, Paula quivered with the suspense of it all. Now was her moment. Was she going to help Red, or tell Eric everything?

In the darkness, half hidden by a tangle of yucca, she saw a certain cavalier in plum-colored satin following them. It was like some dramatic moment on the silver screen. She and Eric sat on a marble bench under pomegranate trees, the ocean breeze fanning their heated faces. A rustle that was not the wind showed where Red was hiding, a revolver smothered in the lace ruffle at his wrist.

She let Eric put his arms about her, the powder from her bare shoulder making patches on the glistening black of his coat.

"Paula, you ran away from Monty. You came to me! I'll never let you go back to him, never! I'm mad about you, Paula. More than ever. You've got to marry me to-morrow." He silenced her reply with a forceful kiss. "If I can wait that long."

The bushes rustled. Paula smiled grimly. Did the cavalier in plum-colored satin like the sample of love-making he had forced on her?

"Listen, sweetheart." Eric's complacent voice was taking a great deal for granted. "I'm making lots of money. We're in on a big deal now. See this telegram!" He struck a match to show her. "It says that at dawn to-morrow, nearly a quarter of a million will be sent from Mexico by secret messenger, to be stored in the smaller vault of our bank till we can divide it. Just myself and three others. My share will be more than fifty thousand. That will be your wedding present. We'll be married and play around with it on a honeymoon in Europe!"

Paula's breath stopped like a current that has been shut off. To-morrow! The thing Red had been planning, living for, the thing that had seemed somewhere in the future, was upon them like an avalanche!

Another thought burst like a bomb through her dizzy brain. Red had never told her that Eric himself was one of that gang of four men, the thieving, murderous gang that had helped kill Red's father and ruin his life! She shrank from Eric with loathing. She had known he was ruthless, shrewd, but not a thief! How had she ever imagined she loved him?

"What do you say, darling?" he insisted fatuously.

The world turned crimson for Paula. She wanted revenge for Red. She wanted to help him. She wanted to follow him anywhere, everywhere, even if he were a fugitive from justice—into the desert, into the mountain, clinging with him on the fast horse with jingling spurs. Oh, if he would only let her go with him! Why, she'd freeze or starve, just to be near him, just to have him kiss her carelessly now and then—for she loved him, loved him, loved him! Why hadn't she known it before?

Then she remembered. Red did not want her. Red would never take her.

She got up stiffly. "I'll let you know to-morrow, Eric," she said in choked tones, and her face wet with tears, rushed back into the ballroom.

The chill of dawn came into the hotel room which she shared with Yugi San, and found her haggard, unsleeping. All night long she had lain there trying to think of a way to keep Red from committing this crime. Although he felt the money was rightfully his, if he took it as he planned, he would be hunted down like an animal. His danger, his suffering, cut her as if her throbbing heart had been laid bare. Alternately with this feeling, came the glory, the sweet shame of her love for him. She was proud of loving him; Jack Delafield, smooth, suave man of charm, and Red—glorious Red, the bandit, who had forced her to drive off with him, and who now held her soul in the hollow of his strong brown hand.

It rushed over her in wave after wave that left her weak and trembling. The kisses of Monty and Eric were nothing, nothing. She had never been desired by any man, because Red did not want her; she had never been kissed by any man, because Red had denied her his lips! Yet she was powerless to save him. After it was over, he would ride away and leave her. Only a love pawn in his game!

Red's knock at the door sounded like the trump of doom. She felt like a prisoner going to her execution when they slipped down to the corner near the bank, shivering under their coats. A small rented car waited near by. In it, Red was to make a dash for the border where the fast horse waited, and Paula, unsuspected, would be left free to take the first train home, or stay in California with Eric.

"Good-by, Paula, and forgive me. You're a great little girl!"

Paula could hardly see the dark head, the slate-gray eyes, for her tears. In a few moments now—— Why, it couldn't be! She couldn't bear it!

"Red," she said desperately. "Don't—don't do this thing! Don't brand yourself for life! In your heart, you know it's wrong. Don't mind about me. I don't matter. I don't count. Kick me aside. I won't tell. Only get away, and start your life somewhere else."

His face grew so dark, she thought he was going to strike her.

"No!" he cried. "No, no, no!"

For a moment, Paula stood still on the bare street corner, the wind whipping her skirts.

"All right," she said shortly. "Let's get going."

She had tried. It was no use. She would follow him anywhere!

She shut her eyes so she would not see him when he left her to wait near the door.

The corner clock struck eight. At eight-thirty, Red had told her, the time lock on the vaults went off. At eight-fifteen, Eric came hurrying around the corner, ready to go on duty.

"Good morning!" said Paula, placing herself in his way, smiling her prettiest. "Why in such a hurry?"

He stopped short, amazed. "Paula, I didn't expect to see you here."

She cast down her lashes. "Well, I got to thinking about last night and——"

Eagerly, he drew her through the side door of the as-yet-unopened bank.

"Come into my little cage, darling, where we can talk. You promised to let me know to-day, sweet." Complacently, he took her hands in his.

Paula looked wildly about her. The shades of the bank were drawn, the big front door shut. No one was about, except the janitor and another early worker. Outside, she had a glimpse of Red. He was signaling her. Her heart flew to her throat when she saw he had not put on the disguise, after all. Ah, the foolish bravado. There he was, dark hair, slate-colored eyes, ready to come in and do this awful thing! If she could only save him, the man she loved!

The clock struck eight-thirty. And at the sound of that one stroke, a plan so simple, yet so daring burst full-born into her reeling brain, that she turned to ice at the very thought. It was the sight of Eric's gun that made her think of it.

"Eric, darling," she murmured, and slipped into his arms. With one quick gesture, she had the gun in her own hands. She turned on him.

"Put them up!" she cried hoarsely. "Quick! And unlock the small vault and hand over that quarter of a million!"

"Paula. Quit joking!"

"Come one step nearer, and see who's joking! To the vault, I say"

Something in her white face and set lips halted Eric. The janitor and the other man came running, only to find themselves lined up, also.

Paula almost smiled at Red's surprised face at the door. She had taken his play out of his hands and he didn't know what to do. Little did he realize what risk a woman will take for a man when she loves him!

Quivering with fear that something would stop her now that she had begun her dangerous game, she drove her prisoners before her, made Eric unlock the vault and give her the canvas bags of money. A flaming sense of power thrilled her as she backed to the door, keeping the trembling trio covered. There was no sound except the ticking of the big clock. Outside, on the street, traffic flowed on, undisturbed.

At the very threshold, Paula cried in a clear voice, "I'm taking this money, Eric Kendall, to keep the man I love from doing it! By rights, it's really his money. It doesn't belong to you and your thieving gang. But we really don't want the filthy stuff, after all. That telegram you showed me last night can be traced, and Jack Delafield and I will have enough evidence against you to send you to jail so fast it will make your hair curl!

Here—take it! I only pretended to get it, to save him!"

Superbly, she threw the bags of money on the floor at the frightened Eric's feet. "Much good it will do you now! And if there is any punishment for my little joke, it is I, and not Jack Delafield who will have to pay! At least, I have saved him!"

Sobbing, with great racking sobs shaking her, Paula ran from the building. Ran, leaving pandemonium, uproar behind her. Ran straight into Red's arms!

Bewildered, he lead her to the car. "Quick, Paula, get in before that mob gets you! I don't know what it all means, but I've got to save you."

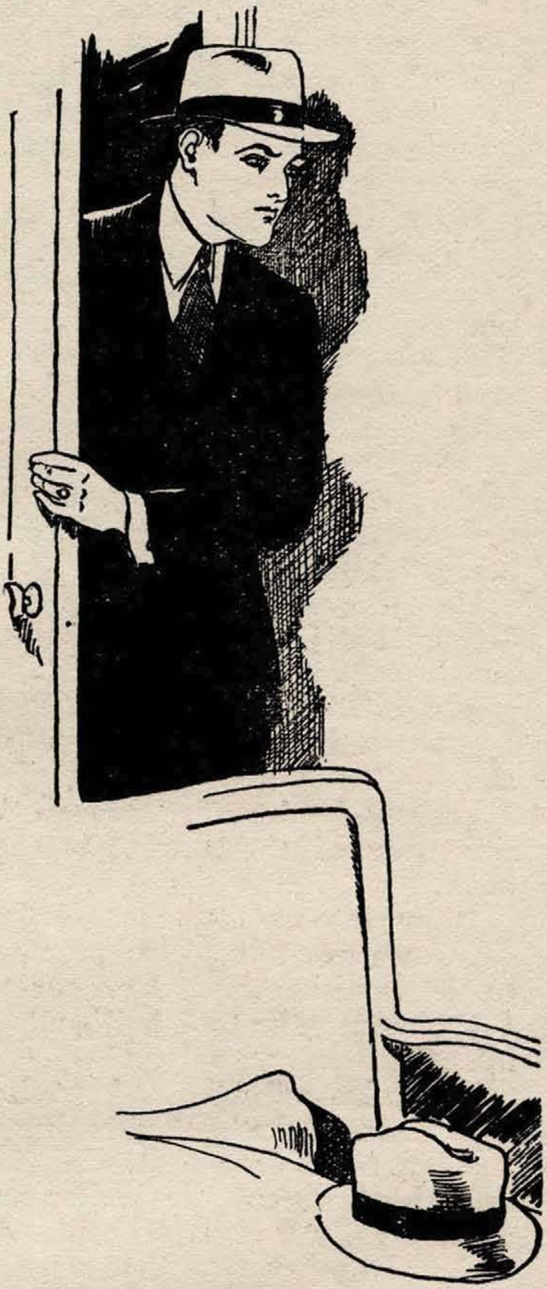
Ah, it was sweet to have him take care of her, to sit beside him, and see him take the wheel. She looked at his brown hand there, and wanted desperately to put her own under it. She wanted to snuggle against him and ride on and on forever. But, of course, it couldn't be! He must put her out soon. After all, she must go back and face the consequences of what she had done.

While for him, there would be the border, the desert, with a fast horse under him. But he would not be hunted. She had saved him from that!

He careened around a corner, driving like the wind.

"Red," she said, trying not to let her lips tremble, "put me out, while you get away!"

"There is nothing for me to run from," he said. "I'm just taking you to safety. As for me, didn't you notice I came out without my disguise? That was because I decided not to take that money after all. I kept trying to signal you, but you didn't see me. From the first hour I saw you, Paula, something different came into my life. But I denied it bitterly. Kept fighting against the thing you meant to me. At last, on that corner back yonder, when you begged me, you made me see what a cowardly fool I would be to carry out my plan. I couldn't go through with it, that's all!"



Far behind, a car was pursuing them, gaining on them block after block.

"So," said Paula laughing shakily,

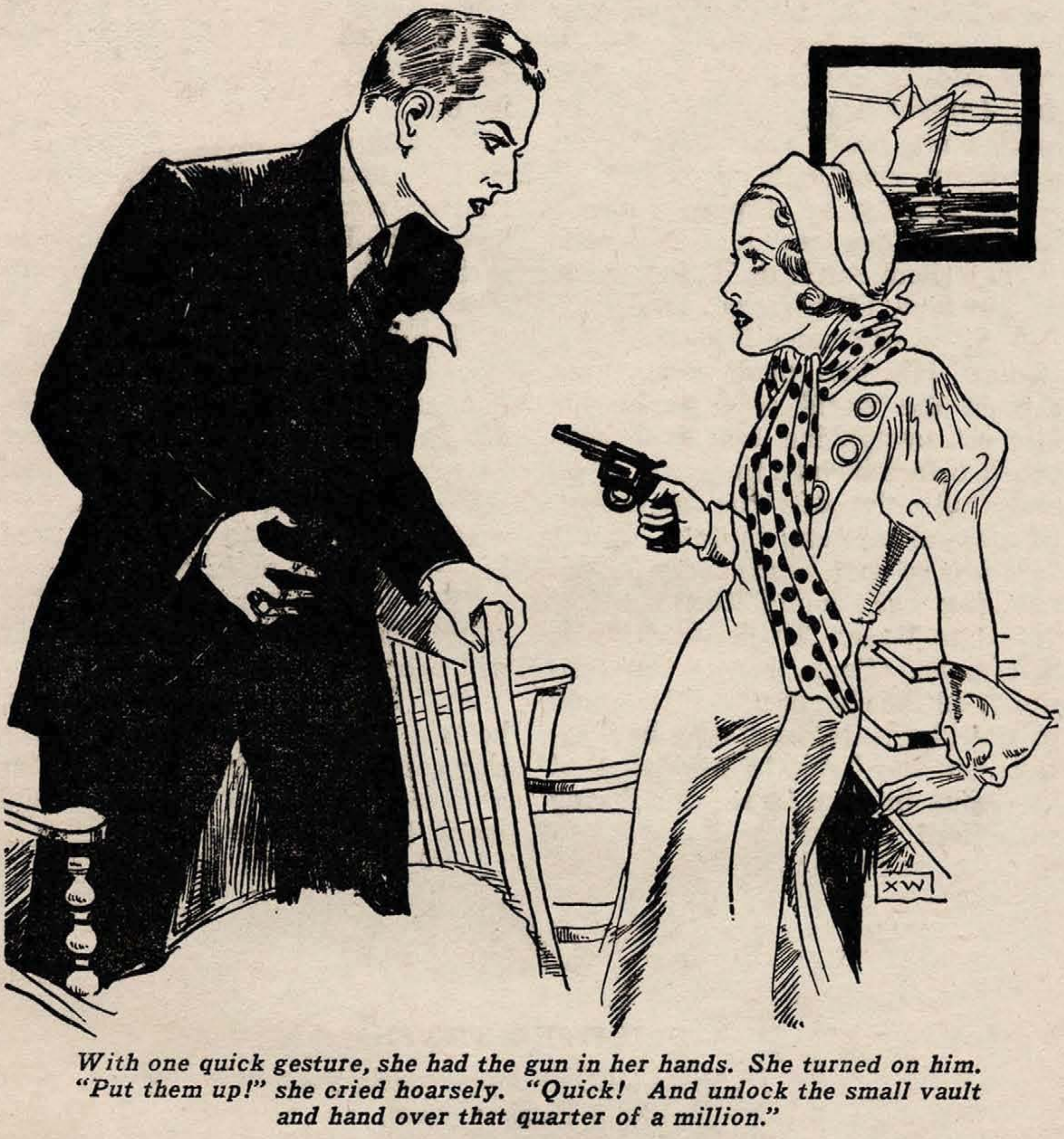
"we're being chased for something neither of us really did! I threw all the money back."

"I can't understand," he shouted against the rushing wind, "why you pulled off that stunt at all. I couldn't hear what you were saying."

Paula's hat was off, gold-brown hair streaming. The suspense and the danger had made her eyes like pools of light, her lips were whipped to a scarlet froth.

"I did it," she shouted back at him, against the rushing wind, "because I love you and I love you and I love you! And you may not have any time for women, Jack Delafield, and your mind may be set on revenge, but you can't get away from me. You kidnaped me, so here I am."

"Ah," said the man called Red, only this time his wonderful voice was vibrant, low, and he no longer seemed to be trying to shout against the rushing wind, "how can there be any revenge, when you



With one quick gesture, she had the gun in her hands. She turned on him. "Put them up!" she cried hoarsely. "Quick! And unlock the small vault and hand over that quarter of a million."

spoiled all that? When you showed me the right way? And what use is there for me to run from you, although I wouldn't admit it, you had me tied the first hour I went into your home, and watched you one night, trailing down the stairs, to meet Monty Lewis? Darling, darling, I might have known I couldn't harden my heart against you, you wonderful, vivid little queen!"

Deliberately, he stopped under a feathery pepper tree on a side street.

"Let them catch us if they want to, but first, I'll have my kiss!"

A flame of tender fire enveloped Paula. His kiss made everything else in the world seem tame; his kiss set everything that had happened before it, into the past. This, and this only, was the beginning! Of life and love and rapture.

It was so that Uncle Jerry, in the pursuing car, found them a few moments later. Uncle Jerry, who had trailed Paula across the continent on the clue of that little crook to her signature, and who had arrived at the bank to ask news of Eric, just in time to see her fleeing with Red!

After that, there was nothing else for Uncle Jerry to do except use his influence and his check book, in having Eric and his crowd brought to justice. And the newspapers made a heroine of Paula!

But Red stubbornly refused to let Uncle Jerry's money do anything for him.

"Sweetheart," he said, after the simple ceremony that meant just another marriage to the clerk, but heaven to Red and Paula, "do you realize that you've married a pretty poor man?"

"Don't try to walk out on me!" cried Paula, her lips on his. "What difference does money make? The little love pawn has taken her heart's king! For always and always!"

He crushed her to him and kissed her—long, thrilling kisses.

"For our honeymoon," said Red softly, "I know a fast horse that will carry double!"

And, holding her close in his arms, he told her of the horse, and of the tiny cabin in the desert where, under a star-spangled sky, they would spend their honeymoon.

PLIGHTED TROTH

CASCADES of copper curls, your hair
   Is like a Paisley shawl,
Protecting shoulders white and fair
Of one for whom I dearly care,
   Who is my life, my all.

Their glory, like a burnished sea,
   Alight with sunset gold,
Reflects the warmth of love that we
Shall know and feel eternally—
   What our embraces hold!

Frances I. Shinn.

First Payment On Paradise

By Winifred Wadell

SHE could hear him puttering about in his room as she lifted her hand to knock. Even after she had rapped on the door, she almost turned back to the safety of her own apartment at the end of the hall. She didn't know his last name. He was an inventor, and his friends called him "Jerry." That was all she knew, except that she had been vaguely aware of his disapproval the few times they had chanced to meet.

Jerry looked like the sort to condemn her for running around with a bunch of carefree artists, more interested in good times than in art. He was frightfully serious about his work. Maybe he needed money, she thought. It would help her plans if he did.

Serena smiled her most bewitching smile when he finally opened the door and faced her with an embarrassed grin.

"I thought you were one of my creditors," he explained. "That's why I didn't come sooner."

"I hope the surprise is a pleasant one." She was somewhat embarrassed herself. He was handsome in a blond, clean-cut way, much handsomer than she had realized.

"That depends. What can I do for you, Miss——"

"Goodhue—Serena Goodhue. I'll tell you if you'll ask me in." She smiled up at him.

When they were seated in his plainly furnished apartment, Serena looked up to meet his puzzled gaze.

"I'm waiting to hear why you came. I'm very busy, you see." He waved in the direction of the cluttered work table.

"You invent things, don't you?" Then, when he nodded, "That's why I think you'll do."

"This is very mystifying. What can my inventions have to do with you?"

"My uncle invents things, too. I want you to marry me."

"Marry you!" he exclaimed.

She laughed at the look on his face.

"Only for a few weeks," she explained hastily. "I've just received word that my uncle is very ill. I must leave for California to-morrow. I wrote him some time ago that I was bringing my husband back there with me, to settle down."

"It should be an easy matter for you to find a husband. There are many eligible men in New York, and you are very beautiful." His glance was one of contempt mixed with admiration. "This is doubtless your idea of a joke, but I'm really not interested." He rose as if to end the interview.

"It's not a joke, and I'm not interested in you, either—not really," she replied quickly. "The man I was engaged to jilted me. He married another girl a week ago." Her lips trembled. "I didn't tell Uncle John his name, and since my uncle can't live more than a few weeks longer, I thought maybe, for a thousand dollars, you'd marry me."

"You didn't mention the thousand dollars. I might be interested, after all."

"It's strictly a business proposition," she said coldly. "I thought you might help to make Uncle John's last days happier, since you're both interested in the same thing."

He eyed her steadily. "No doubt you're still in love with the man who jilted you. Why don't you tell me your real reason for making this proposition? You want to save your face with your friends here in New York, isn't that it?"

Serena felt the angry color rise in her cheeks.

"Yes, I still love him. I'll always love him. Maybe I do want to save my face, as you put it. But that isn't my real reason for asking you to marry me. Please believe that."

He rose to stand in front of her, his arms folded across his chest. Looking up at his lean, athletic figure in worn gray tweeds, Serena was suddenly ashamed. Here was a man who took his work seriously, who lived for an ideal! Perhaps she was missing something, after all.

"You don't know the meaning of the word 'love,' " he told her gruffly. "You're selfish and self-centered, like the rest of that bunch you run around with. I know what you are —calling yourselves artists as an excuse to ignore the conventions, posing as the real things, when you're nothing but imitations!"

"I didn't come here to be insulted," Serena said, rising to face him, her brown eyes bright with anger. "I don't care what you think of me or my friends. I don't want to be married to you for even a few weeks. I'll find some one else."

She turned quickly away from the look in his eyes.

"Wait!" he commanded. "I'm sorry I said what I did. I need a thousand dollars badly. You might find a man less decent than I am. I assure you I'd have no desire to take advantage of the—situation." He laughed boyishly. "I have a hunch I'd earn the money, coping with that spirited temper of yours, if I married you for a few weeks."

"I'd see that you earned it," she answered, a dimple appearing at the corner of her mouth. "I'm not promising that the job will be an easy one."

"What's your uncle's last name?" he asked.

"Furman—John Furman. Have you ever heard of him?"

"I'll say I have! He's one of the really great inventors. Why didn't you tell me sooner? I accept your proposal, if you'll have me."

"I—I don't know," she stammered. It seemed absurdly melodramatic now; her impulsive decision to run down the hall and ask a man, who was almost a stranger, to marry her. She wanted to hurt Landell Carnes! Hurt him as he had hurt her. He had thrown her over for a girl with loads of money, and had gone abroad with her to study art. Serena pretended that she had broken the engagement, but she knew that her friends suspected the truth.

"I'll try to make it as easy as I can for you," Jerry offered gently. "You've been hurt, but it's mostly your silly pride. I'm going to take care of you till you're back home in California." He held out a strong brown hand. "Shall we shake hands on our bargain?"

As she put her hand in his, Serena felt tears dangerously close. She couldn't bear sympathy now. Her voice was sharp with pain when she answered: "Our bargain doesn't include pity from you. I'm quite capable of taking care of myself. If you think you'll be able to stand me for a few weeks, we'll be married this afternoon."

She turned and hurried out of the room, to the haven of her own attractive apartment.

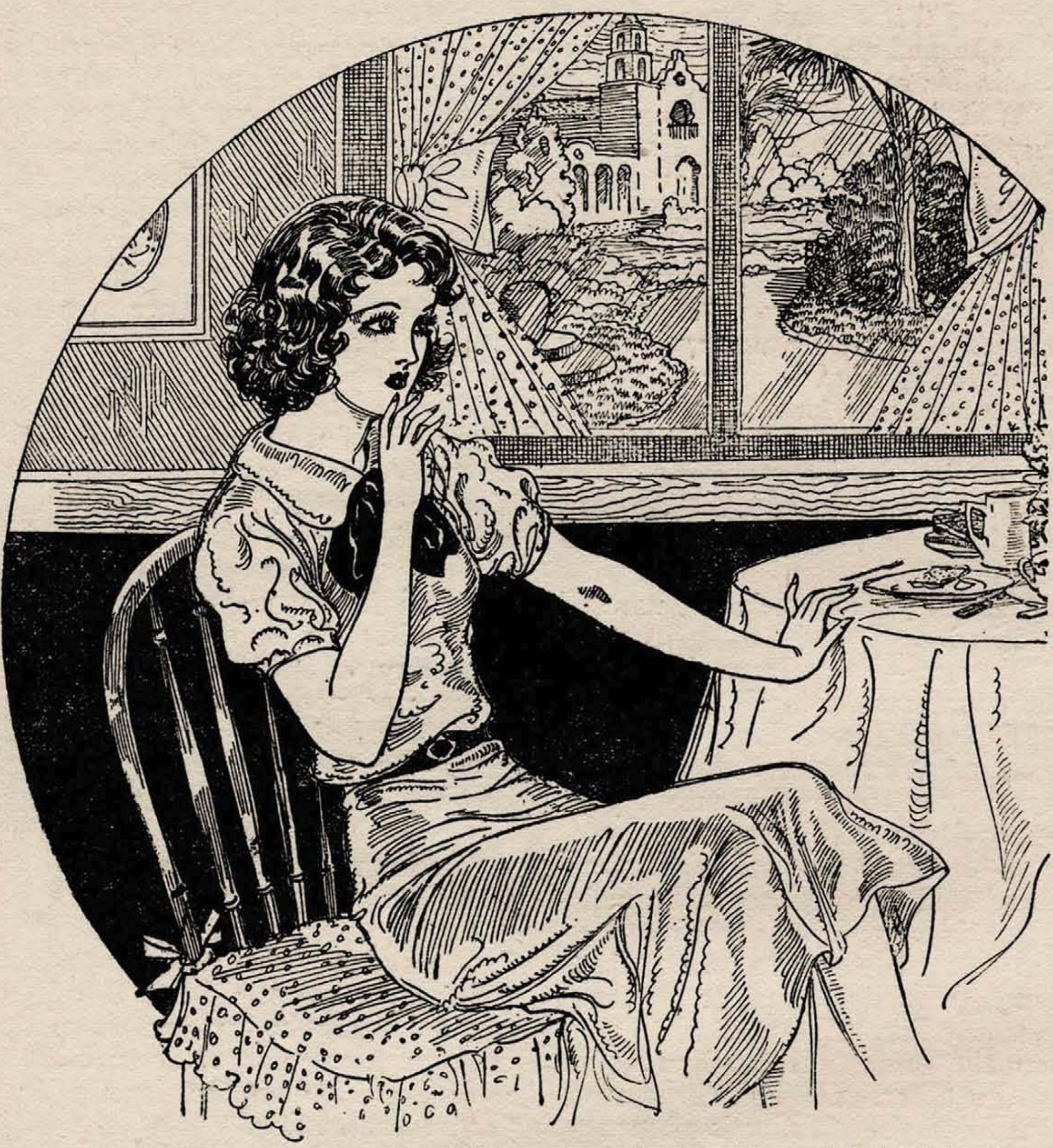
His name was Jerome Brandon, and he did have decent clothes to be married in. Serena was thankful that she hadn't offered to buy him a new outfit. He probably had a lot of silly pride, himself. She wished her friends could see her new husband in his well-tailored dark-blue suit. He was far handsomer than any of the men she knew. There was nothing about Jerry to be ashamed of. When she gave him money for the expenses of the trip, he accepted it casually, without any sign of embarrassment.

The hours that followed were like a hectic nightmare. It was not until after they were on the train, headed for California, that Serena curiously removed the worn old ring from her finger. Jerry had placed it there during the ceremony. Some initials were inside, and the inscription: "Love Everlasting."

"Love everlasting," she repeated to herself, and laughed mirthlessly. Her husband had a most peculiar sense of humor. Here she was, married to a man she barely knew, while her whole being was crying out for Landell. Dear, handsome Landell, who had broken her heart as carelessly as he had won it.

Jerry's cool acceptance of the

situation was more than Serena had bargained for. He saw that she was comfortable, that she had magazines and cigarettes, then left her, his



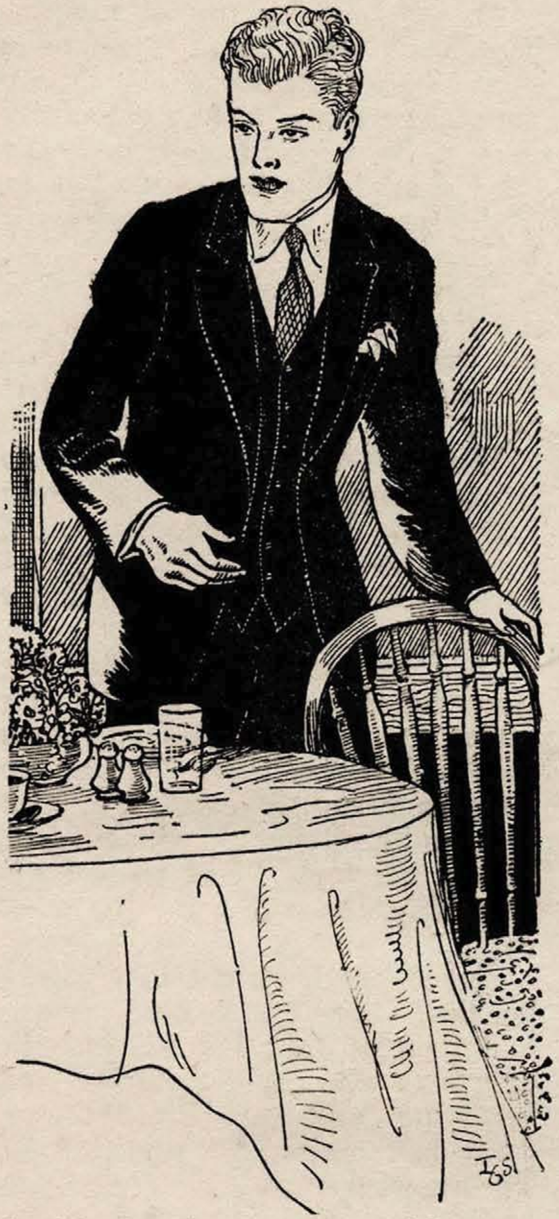
Serena had thought that Landell was the only man who could thrill her, and here she was trembling because Jerry had pressed his lips to hers. The knowledge made her angry with herself and with Jerry, who had kissed her merely as a friend.

bride, alone, sunk in an abyss of misery.

When they drove up before the rambling Spanish house that her uncle had built shortly before he became ill, Serena glanced at Jerry. He was looking about indifferently, his lips set in a straight line.

"It's part of your job to pretend to like me," she reminded him sharply.

"I do like you, Serena." He turned to look into her eyes. "In spite of myself, I find I like you. I'll play the rôle of devoted young



husband when we're with your uncle."

"I didn't mean that," she said, and flushed because his eyes were laughing.

"Pretty setting," he said, changing the subject quickly.

"It's beautiful here," she agreed dully.

The very brightness of the scene made her feel tired and miserable, as if she had already lived her life, and had come to this lovely spot to die. The red tile roof of the house gleamed in vivid contrast to the green of the grass and foliage. Everything was bathed in California sunshine. If she had only been coming home with Landell, instead of Jerry! Her longing to see him was at times almost physical pain.

"This is my husband," she heard herself saying to her uncle's nurse, who met them on the patio and kissed Serena with the freedom of long service.

"Your uncle is so happy about your marriage," she said after she had shaken hands with Jerry. "He has been looking forward to the day when you return home with the man you love."

She led the way to a far wing of the house, where the sick man had his quarters. Serena choked back her tears when her uncle took her hand in his and said feebly, "My little girl has come back to me. She has some one to care for her after I'm gone."

He looked at Jerry, then, as if satisfied with what he saw: "You are a lucky fellow. Serena may have seemed thoughtless at times, but underneath she's fine and true."

"I know that, sir," Jerry said so emphatically that Serena looked at him quickly to see if he meant it.

"I'd like to live long enough to see your children running about the place, but that can't be."

Serena looked away to keep Jerry from seeing the flush that spread over her face. When she glanced back at him, she was surprised to find that his eyes were gentle. She liked Jerry, in spite of herself. He was so straightforward, so much worth while.

At breakfast the following morning, he greeted her with boyish enthusiasm.

"It's a privilege to be here with your uncle. He's a great inventor, and he's a grand old man, besides."

"I'm glad. It will make things easier," she said, seating herself opposite him.

She had put on a becoming red-and-white knitted sports dress. Jerry didn't comment on her appearance, but his blue eyes held approval.

"Your uncle sent for me early this morning. We had a nice chat about your future. Our future," he corrected himself. "That's good!"

"You didn't let him suspect anything!" She looked at him sharply. Fear filled her heart.

"Trust me, Serena. I let him do most of the talking. This is going to be one of the most wonderful experiences of my life. Your uncle has given me permission to use his lab. Isn't that an honor?" Then, in answer to the question in her eyes: "I've been trying to put across a little gadget of mine. That's why I went into this deal."

"You've told me very little about yourself," she reminded him.

"Didn't think you'd be interested. If I put this invention of mine over, it will mean everything to some one waiting for me back home. Some one I love very much," he added tenderly.

"I understand," she murmured. Jerry was in love, and he hadn't told her. She had confided in him, and he had kept silent about his own affairs. She might have known that any man as nice as Jerry would have a girl.

"I've bored you with my troubles, when you have plenty of your own. I do hope you can put your invention across."

"I'm being paid to listen to your troubles," he said with his appealing, boyish smile. "Anyway, I haven't been bored."

He was laughing at her. She rose with dignity.

"You're making fun of my unhappiness. Just because you have some one waiting for you, to share your success, you make light of my misery. I—I wish I could die!" she cried, tears filling her eyes.

He rose to face her across the table.

"I wouldn't make light of your unhappiness, but I wish you'd forget that cad you were engaged to. He isn't worth breaking your heart over."

"He isn't a cad. You have no right to say that. You don't even know him. He married another girl because he owes it to his art to get ahead. He still loves me, I know he does."

"And he turned down a love like yours for the sake of his art." He came around the table and took hold of her shoulders. "I want to be your friend, Serena." He bent his blond head and kissed her softly, full on her lips. "Just to seal our friendship," he said, not quite steadily.

Serena put her right hand up to her lips. Jerry had kissed her! She had thought that Landell was the only man who could thrill her, and here she was trembling because Jerry had pressed his lips to hers. The knowledge made her angry with herself and with Jerry, who had kissed her merely as a friend, because he loved another girl.

"Never do that again," she demanded. "A gentleman would respect our bargain."

He smiled down at her.

"Forgive me. You looked so little and sweet and unhappy."

In a few days Serena realized that Jerry was avoiding her. She knew that he was spending most of his time in her uncle's lab in the basement. She stood it as long as she could, then went down and knocked sharply on the closed door.

"Come in," he called.

He glanced up from his work, scarcely seeming to see her.

"You seem to be busy these days," she said, watching his long fingers move expertly over the machinery on the table.

"Yes, I'm pretty busy," he grunted.

"Isn't that Uncle John's invention you're working on?"

"Just looking it over. Too bad he couldn't finish it." He didn't glance up.

"He spent years working on that invention. You have no right to disturb his things. I forbid it."

"Your uncle has something here," he said, looking up at her, his whole face alight. "You don't understand what this means."

"I can't see why it should mean anything to you," she answered, and turned and left the room.

That night her uncle grew worse. When the doctors told Serena that it was only a matter of hours, she went in search of Jerry. He was not in his room. She finally found him in the lab. She opened the door softly. He was working furiously with grimly set jaw. Working as if against time. She looked at the work table quickly. It was her uncle's invention.

"Jerry!" she cried out. "Why are you here at this hour?"

"I'm trying to finish some work. Do you need me?"

"Uncle John is dying. He's asking for you."

"There won't be time to finish," she heard him mutter as he followed her up the narrow basement stairs.

Her uncle died an hour later. It was to Jerry he spoke his last words: "Carry on, my boy, and be good to my little Serena."

When Jerry turned away, Serena saw that his eyes were filled with tears. Jerry was a good actor, she thought bitterly. If she didn't know the truth, she'd believe that he was really grieved.

As she waited for Jerry in the library, the day following her uncle's funeral, Serena's mind was a confused jumble. Jerry would soon go out of her life forever. She wondered how it would seem without him. She'd miss Jerry terribly. Miss his quick smile, his eager interest in everything about him. Jerry was so frank and outspoken, surely he must be honest. But why had he been working on her uncle's invention? The doubt arose again to torture her. Could he have known about the invention when he married her? He could finish it and present it as his own work, and no one would be the wiser. But she wouldn't let herself doubt Jerry. He was going back to the girl he loved, and that was that!

He came in quickly, an apology on his lips. "Sorry to have kept you waiting. I've been getting my few belongings together."

"I—I want to thank you—for everything. You were wonderful to Uncle John." She studied his face for any sign of embarrassment or guilt. His eyes met hers frankly, fearlessly.

"He was a dear old man. "I'll be better for having known him."

She went over to the desk and picked up a check. As she handed it to him, she raised her brown eyes to meet his intense blue gaze.

"I suppose you'll be going back to New York soon," he said. "You'll be happy to get back with your artist friends."

"I'm not going back, Jerry. You've made me realize how unimportant my career is. I'm going to settle down here, as Uncle John wished."

"You're a wonderful girl. I want to apologize for the things I said to you that first day. I didn't know you—then." He fingered the check absently. "I guess I was pretty rude. Forgive me."

"Every word you said was true. I didn't make any sacrifices for my ideals—if I had any ideals. It wasn't in me, then."

"Of course it was in you. You just hadn't had any reason to make sacrifices. These weeks here have meant everything to me, always remember that."

Of course they had meant everything to him, she reflected bitterly. He could go back to the girl he loved, with money enough to finance his invention.

"I hope you'll be very happy, Jerry," she said slowly, because she found it very hard to wish him happiness with some one else. "And now, I guess that closes our business deal."

Just then a servant came in with a card.

"The gentleman is waiting in the study, Miss Serena."

Serena glanced down at the card in her hand, and her face blanched. Landell was here, in her house!

"You must excuse me, Jerry," she faltered.

"Shall I wait?"

"Please."

She walked into the study across the hall as one in a trance. She didn't know what she felt or believed any more. When Landell came toward her with outstretched hands, she tried to speak, but her stiff lips could form no words.

"Lovely Serena," he said in his caressing voice. "I've come back to you."

"You've come back," she echoed, her voice sounding strange and faraway. "Why? And where is your wife?"

"I left her. My marriage didn't turn out the way I expected." He took both of Serena's cold little hands in his. "You could always appreciate what it means to my work to have the right surroundings."

"Wasn't your wife willing to help with your career?"

"She wouldn't give me time to work, and she nagged about the bills. I'm a great artist. I can't be bothered with money matters."

Serena studied his face as she had never consciously done before. He was handsome, yes, but there was a weakness about his mouth and chin that she had never noticed before. As she looked at the man before her, Jerry's clean-cut features appeared as clearly as if he stood there in Landell's place. She saw his frank blue eyes, his boyish smile. At that moment she recognized Landell for the selfish egoist he was. What a blind little fool she had been!

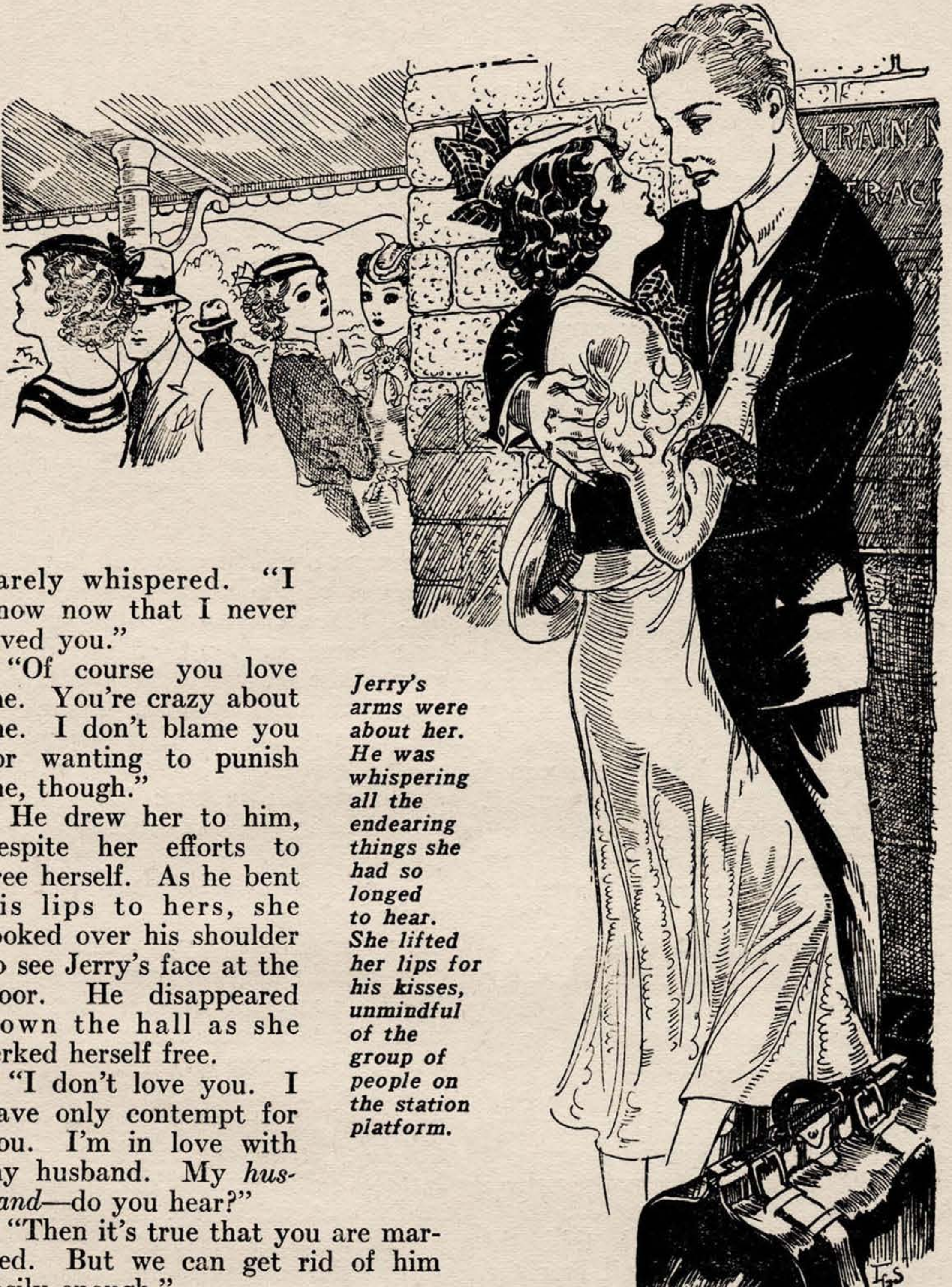
"I knew you'd be waiting for me," he said softly, trying to draw her into his arms. "You understand me."

It was as if a veil had been torn from her eyes. She wanted to shout aloud for joy. She was free! Free of the infatuation that had all but wrecked her life!

"Yes, I understand you," she answered quietly. "I understand you at last."

"You can make up to me for the unhappy time I've had," he went on, misunderstanding. "I suppose your uncle left you well fixed. We'll travel, see new places, have a grand time together."

"I don't love you, Landell," she



Jerry's arms were about her. He was whispering all the endearing things she had so longed to hear. She lifted her lips for his kisses, unmindful of the group of people on the station platform.

barely whispered. "I know now that I never loved you."

"Of course you love me. You're crazy about me. I don't blame you for wanting to punish me, though."

He drew her to him, despite her efforts to free herself. As he bent his lips to hers, she looked over his shoulder to see Jerry's face at the door. He disappeared down the hall as she jerked herself free.

"I don't love you. I have only contempt for you. I'm in love with my husband. My *husband*—do you hear?"

"Then it's true that you are married. But we can get rid of him easily enough."

"Oh, yes, that will be easy," she said bitterly. "In fact, I'm rid of him already."

"Then what is wrong?" he asked impatiently.

"I'll tell you what is wrong. I've thrown away my chances for happiness because of a cheap substitute for love. I married a real man and didn't have sense enough to appreciate him. I wouldn't give the memory of one of Jerry's smiles for a lifetime with you. Now go!"

But it wasn't so easy to send Landell away. Serena had to listen while he enacted the rôle of broken-hearted lover. While he talked she heard a car go down the driveway. Her heart sank. Surely Jerry wouldn't go like that; without a word of good-by.

Landell made his dramatic departure at last. Serena rushed out to the porch just as her car drove up. The driver stepped out and touched his cap respectfully.

"Mr. Brandon made his train, Miss Serena."

"Then he is gone," she said dully. Her heart felt like lead within her.

She went inside and down to her uncle's lab as if drawn by an invisible force. Glancing about the room quickly, she saw that her uncle's invention was gone. Her whole world toppled about her ears as she buried her head in her arms on the dusty table.

"Jerry, darling, how could you?" she sobbed. "I thought you, at least, would play fair."

She wanted to die, here in this room, where her uncle had spent so much time. In this room that had meant so much to Jerry. He had told her that she didn't know the meaning of love. She knew, now. Jerry had gone back to the girl who was waiting for him. Now it was too late!

She wearily dragged herself up to her room. A haggard-faced girl looked back at her from the mirror of her dressing table.

"Jerry is gone," she told the image sadly. "He doesn't love me. He has gone back to her—that other girl, waiting for him."

Her gaze fell on a letter propped up against one of the ornate bottles on the dressing table. She opened it with shaking hands. The check she had given to Jerry fell into her lap. She read the words through a blur of tears.

> SERENA DEAR: I'm fading out of the picture, I wanted to surprise you with news of the success of your uncle's invention. I know I can put it over, and it will mean a nice income for you. Find happiness with the man you love. The "some one" waiting for me is my mother. It might amuse you to learn that I love you with my whole heart and soul. JERRY.

It was the postscript that brought a sob to her throat. Just a line, saying:

> I can't take the check. Please accept my services as a small payment on paradise.

Serena could never recall how she got out of the house and into her car. When she came to herself she was thundering out of the driveway. The train had been gone for twenty minutes or more. There was the bare possibility that she might overtake it at the first station. As she drove she prayed: "Dear God, let me be in time. I must ask Jerry to forgive me."

The California highway gleamed white in the dusk. On and on! Seventy miles—eighty. Once she thought she heard a train whistle in the distance. She pressed her foot down on the accelerator, and the car reeled crazily onward. She kept her eyes glued to the ribbon of road unwinding before her. She'd probably wreck the car and kill herself, but she didn't care. She didn't want to live without Jerry, anyway.

The train was still at the station when she stopped her car with shrieking brakes. Breathing a sigh of thanks, she climbed on the nearest coach. She was scarcely conscious of the curious glances of the passengers. She knew that her hair was blown about her face in wildest confusion. What she didn't realize was that she was altogether lovely in her yellow sports dress, that enhanced the lights in her hair and eyes; red-brown hair, and hazel eyes, now dark with excitement.

She found Jerry on the observation platform. As she took hold of his arm, the train started to move.

"Jerry!" she cried. "You must come with me. Hurry!"

"Serena!"

His cry held longing and heartbreak.

"I'll explain later, Jerry. The train is moving. We must get off." She pulled at his arm.

He picked her up in his strong arms and sprang lightly from the moving train. Putting her on her feet, he faced her, a stern look in his blue eyes.

"Now tell me why you are here. What is wrong?"

Serena hesitated for a moment, at a loss how to begin. "Nothing is wrong," she finally said bravely. "I just came to tell you that I love you."

Jerry stared at her in amazement. "You love me? But, darling—I mean, Serena, I saw you in another man's arms. Please don't torture me. Tell me what this is all about."

"I'm not torturing you, and I didn't want to be in his arms. If only you'd waited, you'd have heard me tell him that I love my husband. Oh, Jerry, won't you please come back—to finish making the payments on paradise?"

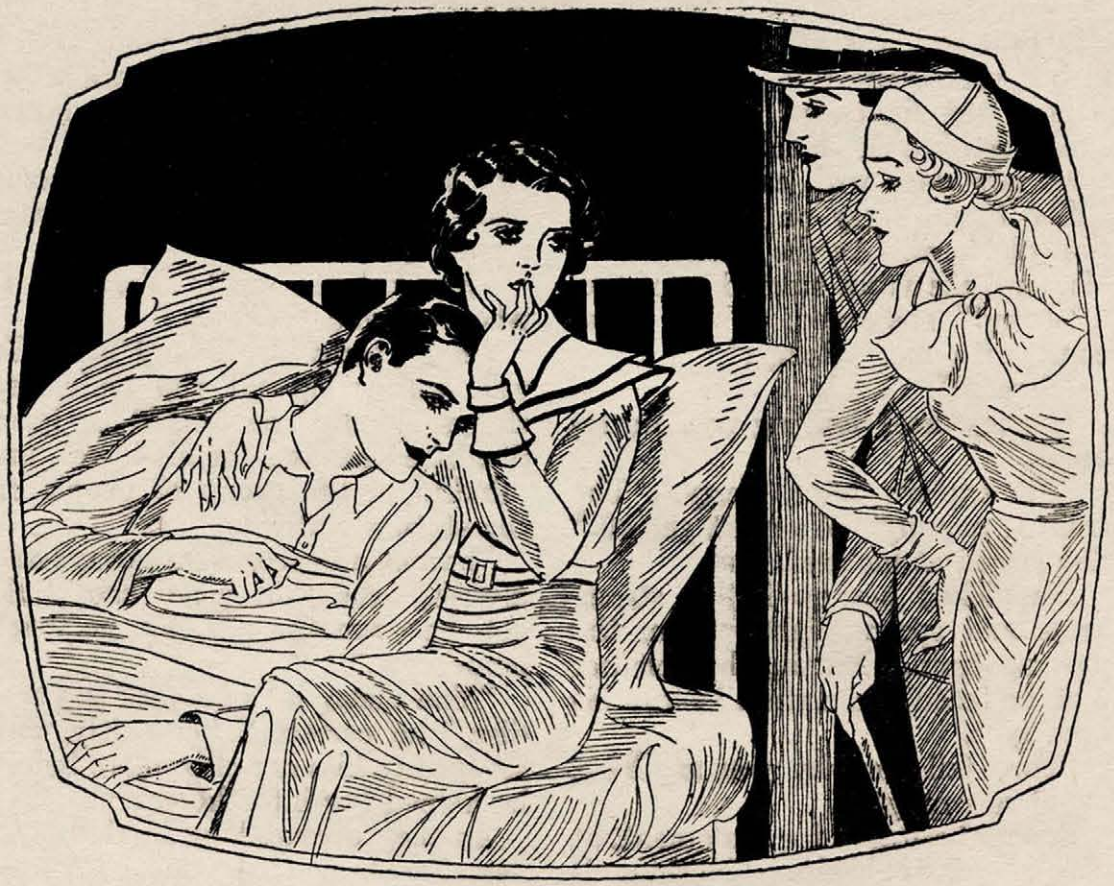
"My dearest one! Paradise is wherever you are."

Jerry's arms were about her. He was whispering all the endearing things she had so longed to hear. She lifted her lips for his kisses, unmindful of the group of people on the station platform.

"I want a husband for always and always," she said when she could get her breath. "Let's go back home now."

"You mean, let's go back to paradise," he corrected her softly, and stooped to kiss her once more before he helped her into the car.

As they drove along in the darkness, Serena nestled against her husband's shoulders with a blissful sigh. Somewhere in the distance a train whistled lonesomely. She shuddered, thinking how nearly she had come to losing this man, who was her very life, and with whom she knew she was to find happiness forever and ever.



Cause For Divorce

By Jessie Reynolds

KATHY'S hair was as brown as a chestnut fresh from the burr and as smooth. There were dancing yellow gleams in it, as though fires had been lighted at its roots. All winter she had been letting it grow until now it lay, a soft coil, low on her neck. She wore a yellow wool dress that clung to her slender figure, and was belted by a wisp of twisted leather, like a gold chain.

She had gone to the door with Wade Duncannon and was standing for a minute with him in the hall. It wasn't much of a hall. It smelled of cooking, and there were worn places in the carpet, and the janitor had forgotten the ceiling lights when he cleaned, but Wade Duncannon wasn't thinking of the hall nor the carpet nor the ceiling lights, and Kathy knew it, and her heart ached with pity at the thing she saw in his eyes.

"You've dove's eyes, Kathy." And smiling crookedly, he added: "A guy named Solomon told that to another woman a good many thousand years ago, and, if you remember, Solomon was a married man, too. A lot more married than

I am. That's supposed to be a joke, Kathy."

But Kathy didn't laugh. She didn't smile. "I wish you wouldn't, Wade," she pleaded. "And I wish you wouldn't keep making excuses for coming here evenings. Night before last it was some papers I'd forgotten to sign at the office before I left. Last week it was something else just as absurd. To-night it's those bonds. They're in the safe. You saw me put them there yourself. And this is my sister's home, Wade. It isn't mine. Shiela is beginning to notice and so is Bob."

Before the look in Kathy's honest gray eyes, Wade's dropped guiltily. He said, sullenly like a shamed boy: "I did look in the safe. Honest I did, Kathy, and I couldn't find them, and Cameron did want them in a hurry. He called me at the club. As for that sister and brother-in-law of yours, if they don't know I'm crazy in love with you, they're blind.

"Kathy dear"—his sullenness softened to pleading—"it isn't as though Helen didn't want a divorce. She does. She's as anxious for one as I am anxious to give it to her, but she wants a New York divorce, where incompatability and mental cruelty don't go. And I'm just old-fashioned enough not to let her drag my name over every paper in this town for a—a whim. Unless you ——" There was humbleness in his eyes; humbleness in his stammered unfinished question.

But, at Kathy's shaken head, his humbleness was forgotten. He caught her hands in a tight grasp and pulled her to him. His dark eyes bored down into hers, fired with jealous anger.

"What's the matter with me, anyway?" he asked. "Thirty isn't old. I've got money, and a clean past—as men's pasts go. Cleaner than lots of men I know, or Helen wouldn't be howling her head off for a divorce she can't get! It's another man, that's what it is. You love some one else. Who is he? If I knew whom I had to fight! If I——"

But Kathy's fingers were on the door, holding it open, and her voice, clear and final, was carrying out into the hall, and back into the living room behind her:

"I'll find those bonds for you to-morrow, Wade. They're in the safe right where I put them. I'll come down early and get them out for you." And then, Wade's feet were on the stairs, and Kathy had turned toward the kitchen, and the half prepared tray for Shiela, that Wade's coming had interrupted.

Kathy was glad, almost, of Shiela's headache that had sent her early to bed. She was glad that Bob wouldn't be home until late. She felt terribly depressed. Wade was so kind. So good. Even if he did have a good business and plenty of money, life had given him a bad deal. He wanted a home, a good wife, some one who would be content to settle down and live a peaceful life with him. Kathy knew, too, that he wanted her. If only she could go to him. If only she could let his love infold her, protect her. If only she could forget this blind, hopeless devotion for Bob, that she had hidden so long in her heart! That last year in the university, she had been so sure of him, before Shiela's coming had spoiled it all. So sure and so happy! Then Shiela and her frail loveliness, her blond wistful appeal, had arrived and Bob was her brother-in-law instead of her husband, and worshiping at Shiela's spoiled, indolent little feet.

Kathy sighed, and brushed at her

eyes. Shiela's tray—she must get it in to her. And those bonds of Wade's. Strange he couldn't find them.

She had almost reached the kitchen, when a noise made her stop, turn around. It came from the bedroom. It was Shiela, crying. Real crying, not the spoiled first-of-the-month whimpering that could bring Bob's arms about her in quick forgiving for a huge pile of unpaid bills. This was terrible crying. Wild sobs with terror behind them and fear.

Kathy ran for the bedroom and threw open the door. "Shiela!" she gasped. "Shiela!" For a wild instant her heart almost stopped, at the sight of the crumpled froth of lace and silk on the floor at her feet. But at Kathy's voice, Shiela raised her head from the arm that had cradled it, and dragged herself to her knees. Her blue eyes were horror-filled, and her tiny face was twisted with fear. On the floor by her side was a bottle with the cork out, and the air was filled with a sweet, heavy odor.

"Shiela Christie!" Kathy raged, and snatched at it. "That's the laudanum Bob got for his toothache! What are you doing with it? What does this mean?" But, before she could move, before she could reach Shiela, or touch her, Shiela was at her knees dragging at them crazily, yelling things at her, horrible things, about those bonds Wade Duncannon had been hunting for; about being at the office, and seeing them in the safe, and——

"You mean," Kathy heard herself saying slowly, "that *you* took those bonds, Shiela?"

"Last week!" Shiela wailed. "That day when I came in to see you and you left me alone to hunt for something in the file room. I—I saw them there, where you had put them, and——

"Oh, Kathy, don't look at me like that! Don't! I had to have money. I just had to. I owed every one! Things Bob never had heard of. That fur coat I'd told Bob I'd saved the money for—I paid for it with my house money, and they wouldn't take it back, and the grocer said he was going to sue us! Oh, I was crazy!"

"But those bonds were worth a thousand dollars, Shiela!" A thousand dollars! You didn't owe that much! You couldn't! Where's the rest of it? Maybe we can make it up some way—borrow the money."

"It's gone. Every bit of it. It's gone." Shiela pulled herself to her feet and stumbling to the bed, threw herself across it. Her weak face was swollen with tears. Tears hung heavy on her long lashes. "A woman I know who plays the market—she she told me if I could get something to use for collateral, she could make thousands for me. So—so I gave her five hundred dollars and was going to get everything back before you missed it at all.

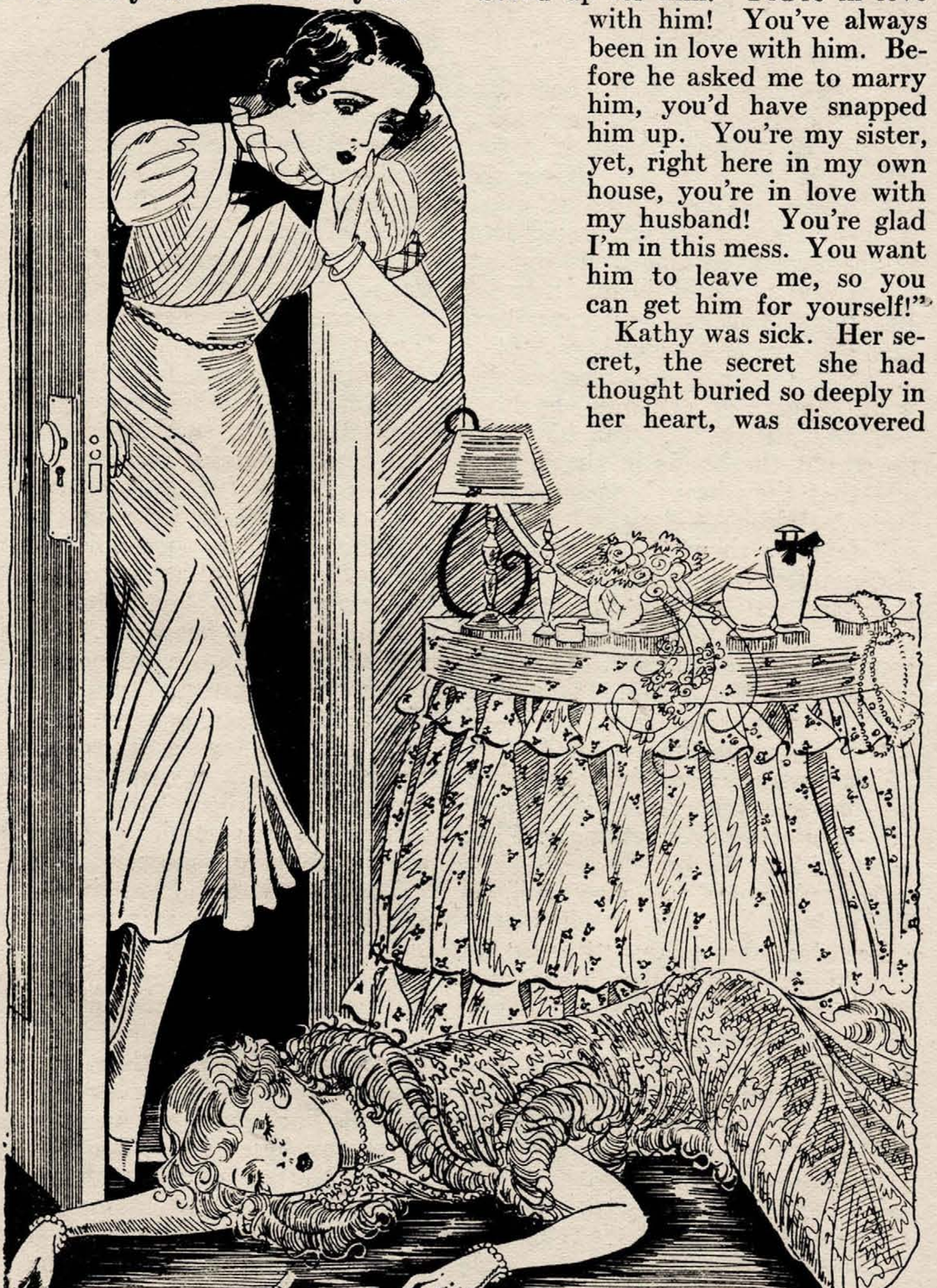
"How did I know she'd lose it for me? How did I know the market would drop like it did? And out there to-night, when I heard Wade Duncannon asking you for it, when I knew they'd find me out—— Oh, I wish I were dead! I do! I do! I tried to kill myself and I was too scared even to die!

"They'll send me to jail, and Bob will hate me! He's so hard about money, Kathy! So dreadfully hard!"

"Hard!" Kathy's eyes swept the room, its frivolous lace pillows, its gaudy toilet table littered with powders, perfumes and creams. "Seventy-five dollars a week, Shiela, and every cent of it turned over to you! Hard! And now you've brought this on him! Oh, Shiela, how could you? How could you!"

"That's right Take Bob's part! Stand up for him! You're in love with him! You've always been in love with him. Before he asked me to marry him, you'd have snapped him up. You're my sister, yet, right here in my own house, you're in love with my husband! You're glad I'm in this mess. You want him to leave me, so you can get him for yourself!"

Kathy was sick. Her secret, the secret she had thought buried so deeply in her heart, was discovered



"Shiela!" gasped Kathy. "Shiela!" For a wild instant her heart almost stopped, at the sight of the crumpled figure at her feet.

at last. The walls reeled. The floor swayed. The ivory of her cheeks was a crimson agony of shame.

Shiela slid to the floor, dragging the ruffles and satin of her bed with her. She snatched at Kathy's arm, her fingers digging cruelly into the soft flesh. "I'm horrid! I know I am, Kathy. You've been so good to us—living here when you'd lots rather have lived alone, and paying board and all, but I can't help it! I'm mad! You can help me out of this, Kathy, and you've got to!

"Wade Duncannon is crazy about you. You could tell him anything and he'd believe it. Tell him you never put the bonds in the safe at all—that they have been lost, mislaid. Tell him——"

"He gave them to me himself," Kathy interrupted dully. "He stood there and watched while I put them in the safe. And no one has the combination of that safe but Wade and myself. Not a soul. To-morrow he'll know they are gone, and——"

"Well, suppose he does find out." Shiela's words were slow, she kept her eyes averted. "What if he does? He—you could do anything and get away with it, Kathy."

Kathy's voice was very still, as still as her white face and dove-gray eyes, when she spoke: "I could let him think I stole them? Is that what you mean? Because Wade Duncannon loves me too much to harm me, I could let him think me a thief, to save you?"

"Not to save me alone!" Shiela wailed. "To save Bob, Kathy! He's the one who'll suffer most and you know it. You know what the doctor said about his heart. What any shock—anything sudden or terrible was liable to do to him?" She snatched at Kathy's hand, grabbed from it the still half-filled bottle. "If you won't help me, Kathy, I'll kill myself! I will. When he comes home he'll find me dead! And he'll die, too. The shock will kill him. You'll be a double murderer, Kathy!"

She ran for the bathroom, slammed the door shut, and turned the key. Kathy pounded on it. Outside on the stairs she heard the sound of feet. Bob's feet. Heard him in the hall, and heard Shiela's wailed, "Promise! Promise! I'll never run up another bill, Kathy! Never! Promise!"

And then, she was unfastening the burglar chain on the door, with her, "I promise," still on her lips.

She was grateful for the room's dimness. Grateful, for the first time for Bob's brotherly, unseeing eyes.

"H'lo, sis," he mumbled, and threw his coat and hat onto a chair. "Where's Shiel? Hey! Shiela!"

"She's got a headache," Kathy replied. "She's in the bedroom, Bob. Better not turn on the lights. You'll find a cold supper in the ice box." And going to her room, she closed her door very quietly on his anxious, love-filled, "Darling!" It seemed to her suddenly that she couldn't bear any more.

In the darkness of her tiny room, she undressed. It was warm outside. Even the air of the great city, was sweet with the live, soft odor of spring. Down below a car honked. There was the low caress of a man's voice, and the soft laugh of a happy girl. Somewhere a radio was playing, some one was singing a dreamy love song. "Bob! Bob! Bob!" Kathy sobbed. "For your sake! For you!" And kneeling by the window, her brown head on her bent arm, she cried herself into a miserable sleep of exhaustion.

When Wade reached his office the next morning, Kathy was there waiting for him. There were faint shadows beneath her huge gray eyes, and against the pallor of her face, her lips were a splash of crimson. Because she neither thought of it nor cared, she never had been so beautiful.

Looking at her, Wade flushed, and fumbled with his hat and cane to hide the starved hunger that shook him. His voice was casual, even gruff.

"Those bonds, Kathy? I suppose you found them. Cameron is coming for them this morning."

There was a strange tenseness about her silence that brought him about quickly to meet her eyes.

Inside herself somewhere, Kathy was telling herself: "This isn't true. It must be a nightmare: I'm dreaming." While outside, she was saying, baldly, her words bleak and toneless with fright:

"They aren't there, Wade. They aren't there. I took them. I had to have money and I took them to play the market. I had expected to make a lot of money, but I lost."

His hands were on her shoulders, turning her to face him. His eyes were boring into hers. "You what?" he was crying down at her. "You what? Say that again, Kathy! You did what?"

"I took them. I had to have money and I took them. It—it——" She groped wildly for a reason, and snatched at the first thing her half crazed mind could grasp—Shiela's reason. "It was a fur coat I owed for. They were going to sue me, and I took the bonds, to gamble on and lost."

"That's a lie," Wade said. His face was as pale as Kathy's, but his eyes were hot with quick suspicion. "You might as well tell me, Kathy. You took that money to help the man you love. What is his name? If I can't get it from you, I'm going to your sister and your brother-in-law. I'm going to find out." He was reaching for his hat when Kathy caught his arm. She wasn't crying, she was too miserable to cry. But she was sobbing. Dry, tearless sobs that tore at her throat.

"Wade! Please! Please not that! I'll pay you back! I'll do anything, Wade, if you don't tell them. Anything!"

He looked down at her clinging fingers; looked into her eyes. "You'll do anything, will you?" he said. "Anything. Scared, aren't you? And all for a fur coat! Bosh!"

Crossing to a window, he stood there, his arms crossed, looking moodily down into the street below. "All right, Kathy," he said at last, and laughed, and Kathy chilled at his laughter, it was so cold and mirthless and hard. "All right. I'm taking you up on that. You say you were in trouble; that you had to have money. You knew I would have given you ten times that sum if you wanted it, yet rather than let me have the pleasure of helping you, you stole it.

"You owe me a thousand dollars, Kathy, and you're going to pay it back. Do you know how?"

Coming close to her, he stood before her, holding her eyes with his. It seemed to Kathy she couldn't have moved had the world come to an end. She didn't try.

"You are going to spend this week-end up in the mountains with me," Wade went on. "I've got a cottage up in the Catskills, and you're going there with me. You're going to be that 'cause for divorce' that Helen has been wanting me to give her for so long. And you're going to give me that kiss I've starved for and hungered for and dreamed of."

The next thing Kathy knew, his arms were around her, his lips were on hers, and a wild, strange ecstasy, was holding her limp and helpless in his grasp.

When he released her, Kathy stood, very still and very white, staring at him. She was shaking; her teeth were chattering. It wasn't because she had never been kissed before; she had. What pretty girl hasn't? It was that she had wanted those kisses. That the instant Wade Duncannon's lips had touched hers, something had happened to her. Something wonderful, something terrible! Something that had made her forget everything but his lips on hers. But—then she was remembering again!

"You!" she gasped, her voice hoarse with fury. "How dare you? How dare you?" She stared, fascinated, at a muscle that beat and throbbed in his white face.

"How dare I?" Wade asked, and laughed. "Does that mean how dare I kiss you, or how dare I ask you to go up to the cottage with me? You women! All alike, aren't you? Bluff. Promises. You, who were willing to do anything. Anything!" His words came bitterly from between twisted lips. "Righteous now, aren't you? You weren't so righteous when you took that thousand dollars for a fur coat!

"You know I won't make you go through with it, and—I won't. You're cheap, just like Helen. You're cheap and chiseling. But you win."

He reached for the phone, and got the outside office. "I want a thousand dollars in gold certificates, issue L. 19873. Have them here inside an hour." Looking up, he faced a new Kathy.

"I'm not a chiseler, Wade," she said. "I'm ready to kiss you any time you want me to. I'm ready to go with you, too. When do we leave?" There was defiance in her upraised chin. Her whole air was defiant, but there was no defiance in her eyes. Instead there was fear. The fear of a child facing the dark and terribly afraid, and try as she could, Kathy could not hide it.

Wade took her hands. "Kathy, for months I would have given my life to have kissed you just once, as I kissed you now and you haven't let me touch you. For months you could have had me, my name, my love, and you turned them down. And now you are willing to let my wife spread your name across the front page of every newspaper in this town! You are willing to go up there to that mountain place of mine alone, with me, for two nights and a day, for a fur coat! It doesn't make sense.

"I want to know his name! I want the name of the man for whom you're doing this. I want his name!"

It seemed to Kathy that her heart was crying. That inside her, she could feel its tears, but outside she was quiet and still. Even her voice was level and controlled. "Whenever you are ready to go, Wade," she said, and walked away from him.

In her own office Kathy pulled out her machine, and went about her work. She took dictation—Wade's dictation—her fingers pounding methodically at the keys. She took messages—Wade's messages. She listened to his terse, hastily made plans.

He was to call Helen's attorney and notify him when Helen could get her evidence. They were to leave, he and Kathy that very afternoon, after work. He said, and Kathy's cheeks crimsoned miserably: "No need your going home after clothes. Everything you'll need will be at the lodge. You're about Helen's size." And he had added, his lips twisting wryly, "You'll have to fix it up with your family, some way. I'm having no irate brother-in-law bearing down on me with a gun."

"You needn't worry," Kathy had replied and tried to sneer, but the sneer had quickly turned into a sob.

She ate no lunch. She thought that food would choke her. But coming in to her office, Wade said gruffly, "Go get yourself some coffee. You look half dead."

She got some coffee, and called Shiela. Lily, the maid who came three hours a day to clean, answered the phone. "Mis't Christie, she's out, yassum. . . . No'm, I dunno whar she is. . . . I'll tell her to call Mistah Duncannon's office, yassum, and I'll tell her you ain't comin' home till Monday, sure I will."

"She'll get it all twisted," Kathy thought. And then desperately: "What difference does it make anyway? What difference will anything make after Monday?"

At three o'clock, she put on her hat, and closed her desk. "The last time I'll be working here," she told herself. And thinking of the publicity that would follow Wade's divorce, added: "Or anywhere else, probably." Taking the elevator down to the street, she found Wade waiting there with his car.

His foot on the gas, Wade stared down at her. "Easier to dance than pay the piper, isn't it, Kathy?"

"I'm not complaining, am I?" Kathy asked, and bit at her lips to still their trembling.

For a long time they rode in silence. Kathy thought of things. Of silly, inconsequential things. Of the people they passed. Whether they were happy or miserable, as she was. Of the buildings looming about them, and the secrets they held. She thought of Wade's place in the Catskills, of things she had heard about it. How he had built it for a honeymoon cottage and never used it. How he kept it stocked with food and wouldn't have a telephone, and ran away to it when he was tired or overworked or wanted to be alone.

One of the girls from the office had gone up there once with some papers for his signing, and had told about it, her eyes wide with awe. "It's glorious! Flowers and mountains and a lake all his own, and electric lights and swell furniture! And you ought to see the boss in a bathing suit! And laughing like a kid!"

Wade in a bathing suit! Wade, happy and swimming and young! The Wade who had kissed her and awakened her heart to love! Shivering again in memory of that moment's wild ecstasy, Kathy looked up to find Wade staring down at her, and her cheeks crimsoned in angry self-consciousness.

They left the city behind them. Left the main highway behind them. Left civilization behind them, to turn into a dirt road that swirled through blue-black canyons, dark with early twilight.

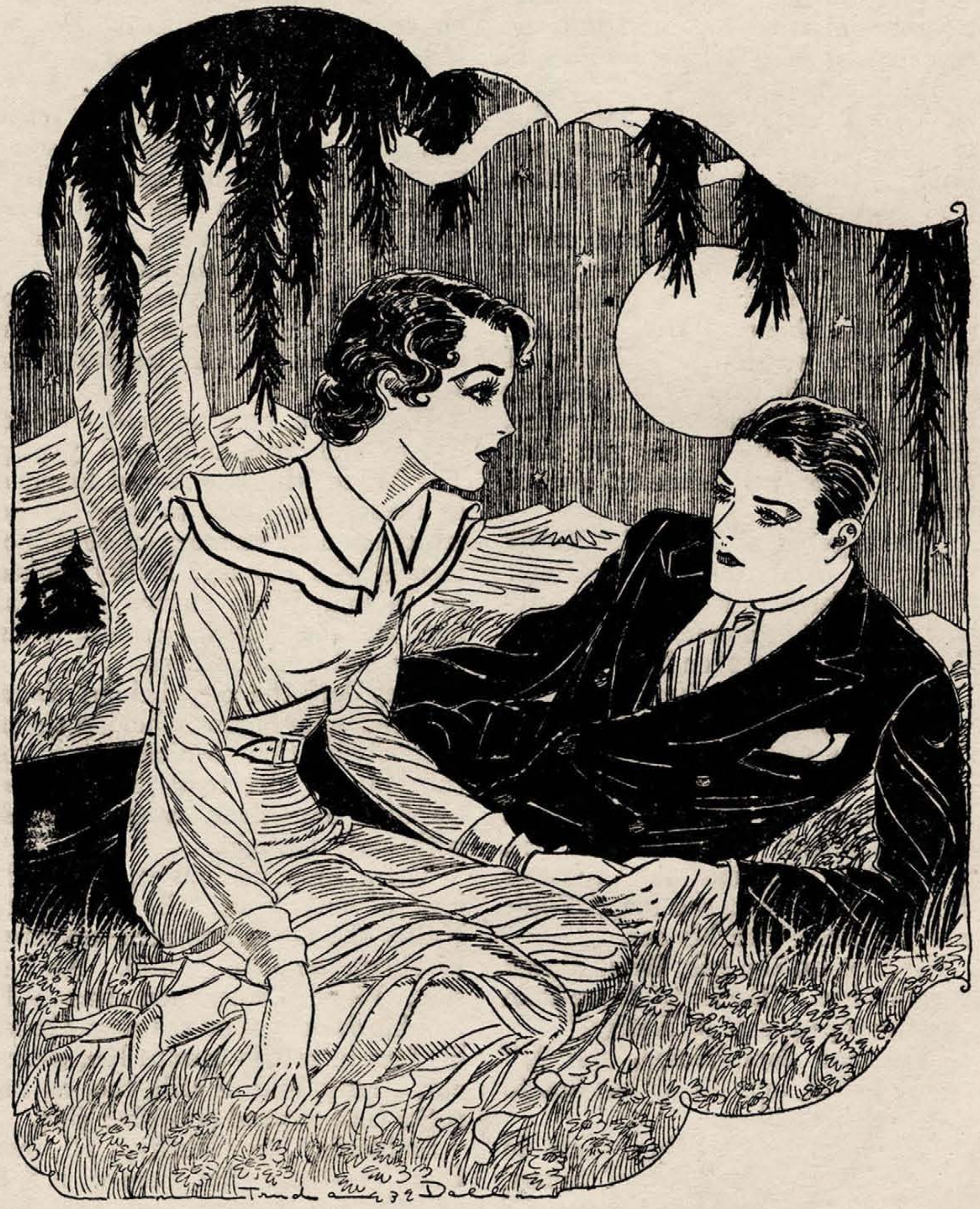
There were no houses, no buildings of any kind. It seemed to Kathy she never had seen anything so silent, so utterly still. At her side, Wade Duncannon was still, too, his dark eyes on the road ahead, his face in profile toward her, clean-cut, strong, and as still, too, as the rocks that loomed on either side.

Suddenly, to Kathy, all her troubles—those that were with her, and those that were before her—became dwarfted and utterly insignificant beside these everlasting hills

Her shoulder brushed Wade's, her fingers touched his sleeve, and rested there, and a sudden strange peace swept her.

Light as her touch had been, Wade answered to it, with a quick look. "A spooky place, these hills," he said moodily. "Have to have a good conscience to ride through them, Kathy. A conscience without fur coats to make it twinge."

Tears, which she had refused to shed before, pinched Kathy's eyes. "You're cruel," she cried and jerked



His hot fingers held hers tight. "I'm not sick. It's your lips I want, sweet. It's you I'm sick for. Give me your lips——" His words trailed into space.

her fingers free. "I—I wasn't thinking of coats or anything else but how far away trouble seemed and —and——"

The car grated to a stop. Putting his fingers beneath Kathy's chin, Wade raised her face to his. "And what, Kathy?" he asked. "What else were you thinking? You touched me with your hand. I didn't ask you to do it, and you didn't know you were doing it. For the first time in all these months, you wanted to touch me. I want to know why?"

And because, beneath the gaze of his steady eyes, Kathy felt as she had felt beneath his kiss, helpless and spineless and weak, she answered him truthfully as a child might have:

"I was thinking it was as though you and I were alone in eternity, and how peaceful it was, and how sweet. And I just—wanted to touch you, that was all. Just without any reason." And she added, irritable and pettish, too, as a child might have done: "I'm sorry you hated it so. I won't do it again."

Listening, Wade's dark eyes were like flames. There were red spots burning high on his thin dark cheeks. He leaned toward her. For an instant, Kathy thought he was going to kiss her again, and fought against that wild something inside her that wished he would. Steeled herself against it, for very shame. But he didn't, and the car was on its way climbing, climbing.

Twilight deepened into night. The road rose higher and higher. Climbed to meet the moon and the stars. Turned at last into a graveled driveway, that darted, like a white tongue, from beneath an arched concrete mouth. Kathy climbed to the ground, and while Wade ran the car into a garage, and locked the doors, she stood, staring, wide-eyed, at the little jewel of a house before her. A white jewel of a house, so white and shining that the moonlight seemed to come from it, and not from the moon at all. There was an arched door with a honeysuckle vine over it, and a lock that Wade opened, to let the warm odor of a closed house out to greet her, and, as she followed him over the sill, there were lights popping on, and doors being flung open, and more honeysuckle, filling the whole house with its heady fragrance.

At the end of a soft-carpeted hallway, glass doors opened onto a white pillared portico, that held the star-dotted sky as in a frame, and listening, Kathy could hear the *swish-swish* of water, carrying the thought of beauty with it, like the soft rustle of a woman's skirts.

Kathy's voice was a hush of delight, and her hand caught at her throat for the wonder that filled it. "It's beautiful!" she cried. "It's dream land. It's love land!" She hardly knew she had spoken, until Wade's harsh laugh brought her back to herself with a jerk.

"Worth a fur coat, is it?" he jeered, and his face was white beneath its tan, and Kathy thought suddenly, almost forgetting the hurt of his words, that he looked ill and strange. She noticed how his hands shook, and how wild his eyes were, and shivered in sudden foreboding, as his hands, pulling her toward him, burned through the thin sleeves of her dress.

"I didn't mean that, Kathy," he said hoarsely. "I didn't want to say that at all. I've got a rotten headache. I've had one all day, and what you said just now hit me on the raw. This house *is* a dream house. I built it of dreams that never came true. It was meant for a love house, and it has never known love.

"Do you want to know what Helen said to me, when I brought her here, a bride? She said, 'Heavens, Wade! This tomb! If you think you can bury me in a place like this, you're crazy! Take me back to the city—quick!'

"There's a garden out there somewhere. Let's go out, Kathy. I want to sit there with you beside me and dream."

In the grass were tiny white flowers like fallen stars. He threw himself down among them and pulled Kathy to his side. His hot fingers held hers tight.

"You're sick!" Kathy cried. "I know you are, Wade. It's in your eyes. It's been there all day and I didn't know it. You're burning with fever. I'm going in and make you some coffee."

She tried to free herself, but he held her close. "Coffee in love land?" he mocked. "It's your lips I want, sweet. It's you I'm sick for. Give me your lips——" And then, his words were trailing off into starry space, and he was doubled up, his hands clasped to his side, his face twisted into a gasping torture of pain.

"My—side!" he groaned. "Had an attack—once—before. They froze it out, and—now—it's come again! Up here!"

How Kathy got him to the house she never knew. As far as the door he had helped her. Had walked, leaning against her, an arm about her shoulders. But there, he fainted. A table was in the way and as he fell, his head struck it. A tiny trickle of blood oozed from his temple to dribble down a gray cheek.

Kathy had to let him lie where he had fallen until she found a bedroom. She was humbly grateful there were no stairs in this house built of dreams. With her arms beneath his shoulders, she dragged him to it, and finally got him onto the bed.

By the time she had his shoes off, and his collar and tie, he was conscious, or partly so, and his face was not pale but red as fire, and his eyes were burning pits that sunk away from the pain that racked them.

"In—the kitchen—the—ice machine," he mumbled. "Could—could you make—an ice-pack? Only hope—to freeze it. No—doctor nearer than—twenty miles. No telephones in dream houses, you know."

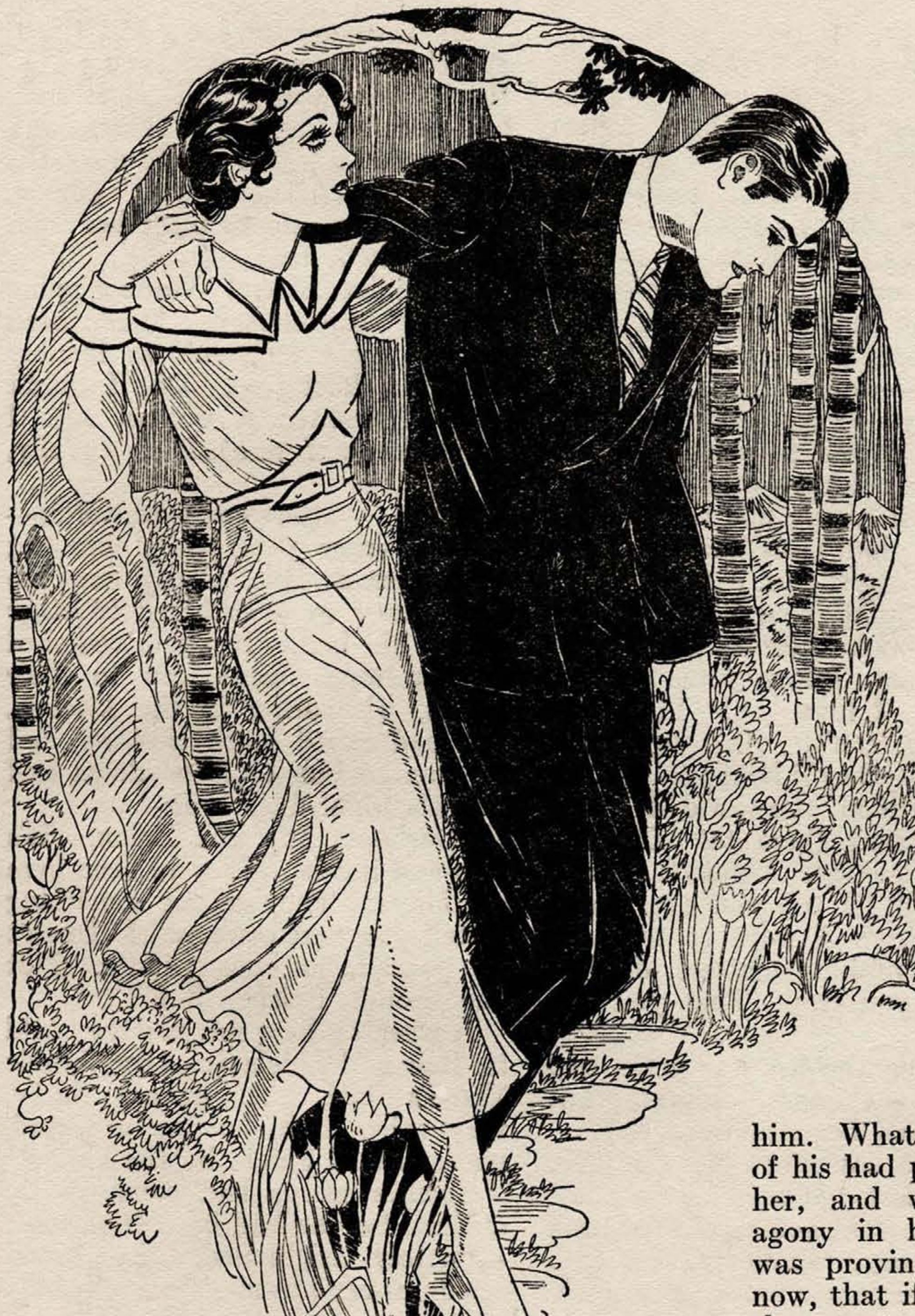
But Kathy didn't hear the last, for she was in the kitchen swinging open the doors of the small ice box, snatching at its tiny, ice-filled trays, her heart pinching with terror at the few cubes they held.

She found a towel and made it into a pack, smashing the ice down with a cleaver, snatched at random from a kitchen drawer. Frantically she ripped Wade's shirt, and slipped the freezing blessedness against his tortured side.

The bruise on his head was swelling. She wet towels and laid them against it, holding them there with cool, white hands. His lips were bleeding, and leaning over, she saw the marks of his teeth in them, and was sick with pity. She was crying and didn't know it, but in an interval of pain, Wade saw it, and smiled bleakly: "That fur coat—it let you in for a—lot of trouble," he whispered. And later, when she had slipped her arm beneath his head:

"That's nice, dear. That's—so—nice. I've dreamed that—you held me like—that. I've dreamed——"

And listening to him, Kathy knew



How Kathy got him to the house she never knew. As far as the door he had walked, leaning against her, an arm about her shoulders. But there, he fainted.

what, it seemed to her there in that lonely room, she must have known all along; that she loved Wade Duncannon. That she always had loved him. What that kiss of his had proven to her, and what the agony in her heart was proving to her now, that if he died, she must die, too. That she couldn't live without him.

Out in the kitchen, beside the refrigerator, its regulator ticking away like mad, she shook impotent, furious little fists. If only the ice would hold out! If only it would make enough, and make it quickly!

Seeing the worry in her eyes, Wade whispered weakly: "Don't—take it—so hard, dear. It's the ice, isn't it? It—can't last. When—it's gone, you can't do anything more. No one—can. I—I—wish you'd clear out. I—I—did—what I said I would do, Kathy. I—told Helen's attorney. They'll be—here. They'll be here—to-morrow. You—you mustn't let them find you. You—you—wouldn't wish that on me, Kathy—to die—with that—on my soul! Even if—you—do—hate me—you wouldn't—want—that!"

And then Kathy had him against her heart and was cradling him there, sobbing to him with an agony of words that poured themselves out as though there were no end: "I love you! I love you! I don't hate you! I love you! You can't die! You can't! See, my arms about you—they'll hold you fast! I don't care if all the world finds me here! I want them to! I didn't take that money. I didn't! When you're well I'll tell you everything—everything! I want to tell you. But now, nothing matters, darling, but that you live! That you live for me!"

And then the ice was gone, and there was nothing left—nothing but her love and her straining arms.

Day was dawning when the fever broke at last. Where his face had been, an instant before, parched and burning dry, suddenly, beneath Kathy's desperate touch, it was wet and cool, and his eyes had closed in an exhausted, painless sleep.

Pulling the covers over him in great thankfulness, Kathy stumbled to the door. Too tired to cry; too tired to even think, she was standing there, staring numbly at a shining dew-washed world, when Bob and Shiela rattled up the graveled drive.

For a second she looked at them, speechless, almost not recognizing them. The world and all it held had been so far away. Then, with a strangled sob, she ran to meet the white-faced, frantic-eyed Shiela, who was running to meet her with outstretched arms.

"He'll live, Shiela! Wade is going to live!" she sobbed. "He's been sick all night long—oh, so terribly sick, but he'll live! Oh, I didn't know I wanted a woman so! I didn't know I wanted, so awfully, to cry!"

Hours afterwards—centuries—seconds—now that Wade was out of danger at last, Kathy kept no time—they were gathered together about his bed. He had wakened from a long, deep sleep to their voices, whispering in the kitchen, and had called Kathy's name, and she ran to him to kneel down and kiss his fright-filled eyes:

"Darling! It's not Helen. It's Bob and Shiela. They've been here for hours. They've got something to tell you that can't wait! I can't let it wait; not one minute. Not one second! Shiela! Bob!"

It wasn't a long story as they told it, Bob and Shiela together, beside Wade's bed. A gaunt, dusty, very sober Bob, holding a wilted, tear-streaked Shiela by the hand.

Shiela's words had come slowly at first, for she had been frightened—terribly frightened. But, conscious of her husband beside her, of his fingers comforting her and giving her strength, she had spoken her confession from brave lips, her tiny blond head tip-tilted, her blue eyes round and true.

As Kathy had known she would, Lily, the little maid had twisted her message. "Miss Kathy done spendin' th' week-end with Mistah Duncannon. Yassum. That's what she say, right ova' this hyar phone." And frantic with guilt, Shiela had taken a taxi to Wade's office, to find him gone. "Mr. Duncannon was in the mountains for the week-end." He had made no secret of his destination, there had been no need. But it was the doorman who told her about Kathy. He had seen them drive away together. That was when, broken, utterly crushed, Shiela had gone to Bob with the truth.

"—and Bob was so good! Oh, you've no idea how good!" she cried. "All this awful night when we lost our way twice, and thought we'd never get here! When we were so frightfully worried, he never scolded me at all! Never blamed me, but just tried to help me. And now we're here, and everything is all right and——

"We'll pay back every cent, Mr. Duncannon, Bob and I! Every penny, and I'll never run up another bill as long as I live!"

Wade's hand was weak as a baby's, but it was strong enough to find Kathy's and cling to it. "Kathy!" he whispered. "Darling! It was your sister you were shielding! There wasn't any man in it at all! Oh, Kathy, Kathy, I want to hear you say it. I want to hear you say there wasn't any man!"

The question was still trembling on his lips, still unanswered, when another car rolled up the drive, and other footsteps came hurrying through the open door and down the hall, until, filling the bedroom door, blocking it, triumphant, exulting, stood Helen, Wade Duncannon's wife, and her attorney, tall, thin-faced and frosty-eyed.

At first, confused a little by the sun outside, Helen had seen only the bed, and Wade lying there, his head against Kathy's shoulder, and she had laughed. "Well done, Wade! Couldn't have been better. Guess this will pass as 'cause for divorce' even in New York!"

Then, her eyes narrowing a trifle, "Who's the girl? Haven't I seen her before? I guess we'll have to have her name."

Wade raised himself. Turned, in Kathy's tender arms. His face was grim. "This is Miss Willis, my secretary," he said. "And, Helen"—he smiled a little sadly, a little wistfully, but crookedly amused—"I would like to have you meet her sister and brother-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. Christie. They are spending the week-end here with me, too. I'm afraid, Helen, my dear—I'm afraid your 'cause for divorce' is no good. A man who has had an attack of appendicitis, over a perfectly chaperoned Saturday night can't——"

"But—you called my lawyer!" she broke in. "You told him if we'd come up to-day we'd get our evidence. You told him that, Wade!"

Kathy stumbled to her feet. She pushed her hair back from her tired, white face. Her eyes were shining; not dove's eyes now, but star eyes, misty and love-filled and sweet. And her lips were sweet, too; upcurved and tender, and crimson with the blood from her beating heart:

"And you can have it" she cried. "Of course you can! He's trying to shield me, can't you see? We were here alone all night. Bob and Shiela just came. We meant to be alone. We love each other. We're crazy about each other. Go on back and get your divorce! I want you to have it! I can't wait until you get it!"

Looking at her, Helen stripped off her gloves and found a chair. "Better give me the story, some one," she sighed. "There's more than 'cause for divorce' in that girl's face."

It was Bob who told it. Told of the stolen bonds, of Shiela's weakness and Kathy's sacrifice. And listening, totally unconscious even that she was doing it, Kathy buried the last ghost of her old hero-worshiping adulation, behind a sister's glowing pride.

When he had finished, Helen stared about the tiny room for an instant, and dabbed, unashamedly at her rouged, mascara-streaked cheeks. "Some kids!" she said. "Some kids!" And going to Kathy, she kissed her. And then, smiling down at Wade: "I'm not such a bad egg, Wade, after all. We'll get our divorce, but we'll make it via Reno. I'm leaving to-night. Good-by, and take the happiness you deserve and I never gave you!" Then her car was tearing out toward the road, and Wade was holding out his hungry arms, and asking, eagerly, jealously, humbly, over and over again: "There's no one else but me, is there, Kathy? Tell me! Please tell me, darling, that I'm the only man you love! Please!"

And Kathy was answering; crying, against his cheeks, against his lips, against his hair:

"There's no one in all the world but you! There's never been any one in all the world but you! There never will be!" And Shiela, stumbling from the room, pushing Bob before her, blinking at the tears that blinded her, knew with a happy, worldly wisdom, that what Kathy was saying was true.

That, once real love comes to a woman's heart, all other loves are, as troubles are: Dreams that vanish with the day.

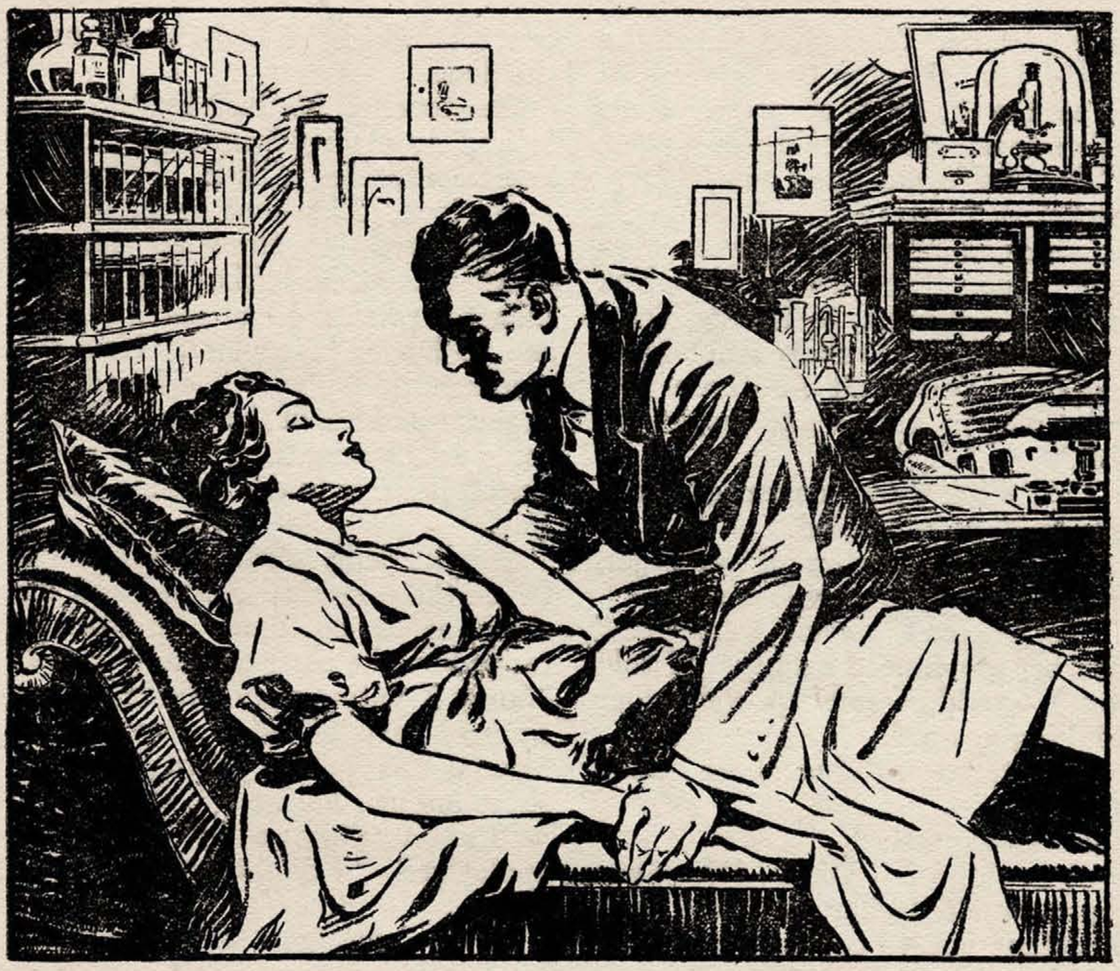
STARS

I SHALL snare the stars from the sky
   In a net of dreams-come-true—
Silver stars, and golden stars,
   And stars that are palely blue—
But I shall bring them, every one,
When dawn springs up and the night is done,
   I shall bring them to you!

And I shall say to you: "Now this
Pale-blue star I will trade for a kiss;
   And this one, silver as frost on the pine,
   You shall wear, if you are mine
For an hour, for a day, for a twelve-month gay—
   Bright, bright in your hair it shall shine!

But this!—this star of smoldering gold,
It shall be yours, to have and to hold,
It shall become of yourself a part,
If you will place it—and me—in your heart!"

A. Leslie.



Day Of Awakening

By Dorothy Ainsworth

HEATHER dropped the bundle of magazines she was unwrapping as the drug-store door opened. Dick Cross, tall and handsome, his face flushed and unshaven, saluted her jauntily.

"Hello, angel face. Ish y'workin' hard?"

"You're drunk," Heather said quietly.

Dick leaned against the soda fountain and yawned. "Well, y'see it was like thish. Last night——"

"I know," Heather interrupted, a note of weariness in her voice. "I know the rest of that speech by heart. The fact remains, though, that we're having a flu epidemic here in Broadville, and you're running the only drug store in town. What about the prescriptions—and what about your promise to me?"

He scowled. "Can't put in fifteen hours a day here."

"I am," Heather retorted, sorting the new magazines that had arrived that morning. "Somebody has to be on the job. Doctor Burns dropped in with a handful of prescriptions before seven this morning."

"Bet he came t'see you," Dick snickered.

Heather's brown eyes were contemptuous. "You *are* drunk. You know he's engaged to Nancy Trenton. See if a little sleep won't sober you up. You can't fill those prescriptions in the shape you're in now."

"Y'd think we were married inst'd engaged," he mumbled.

She slipped his ring off her finger, and laid it on the marble counter.

"We aren't even engaged," Heather announced calmly. "I told you I wouldn't put up with your drinking again."

He stared at her bare hand stupidly.

She continued:

"I can't go on, Dick. I've given you a hundred chances. And each time that you've broken your word it has done something to me—to my feeling for you. I don't love you any more. I can't even respect you," she said with finality.

Dick fumbled with the ring. "'Nother man," he said heavily. "Y're walking out on me because 'nother man."

Heather colored painfully. "You had better get some sleep now. I'll stay on here at the store until you have time to break in a new girl."

He laughed shortly. "Y're only talking, but maybe I'll call your bluff. Other fish in t'sea."

Tilting his hat over his eyes, he walked unsteadily to the prescription room at the back of the store. He had set up a cot there for just such emergencies. Heather waited a few minutes after she heard the creak of the springs. Then she went back, too, and covered him with his overcoat which he had thrown onto the floor.

She touched his hair lightly. He looked so utterly helpless that her heart contracted a little. With pity—not love. Pity that he should, at twenty-five, be throwing himself away like this. She had really meant it when she had told him that she no longer loved him. Now she wondered if she ever had loved him in the true sense of the word. Handsome and fascinating, he had swept her off her feet in a whirlwind courtship.

She hurriedly closed the door between the prescription room and the store as a customer impatiently tapped on the cigar counter. It was Nancy Trenton, very chic in a gray squirrel jacket and a tiny violet-colored hat pulled down over her short auburn hair.

"I'm terribly sorry," Heather apologized. "I didn't hear you come in."

"Two packages of cigarettes," Nancy said sharply. "Charge them to dad."

Heather reached for Mr. Trenton's favorite brand. "I'm glad he's better this morning," she said cheerfully.

"Oh, they aren't for him," Nancy retorted. "He's still too sick to smoke. I'm tired of walking around on tiptoe, so I'm driving over to Linwood to-day. And, by the way, if Grant comes in here, don't let him know you saw me," she said quietly.

It was then that Heather noticed the glistening black roadster which was parked in front of the drug store. The car bore a license plate of another State, and a stranger sat at the wheel. Heather glanced swiftly at Doctor Grant Burns's fiancée.

"Grant is so tied up with his practice he never takes me any place," Nancy said defensively.

The man in the black car played an impatient little tune on the horn. Nancy hurried outside and motioned for him to stop. Heather saw her point her smartly-gloved hand upward. Doctor Burns's office was directly over the drug store.

With a surging mixture of feelings, Heather watched the roadster drive away. Nancy Trenton was a hopeless flirt, and Grant Burns was such a fine chap. Heather knew all about how Nancy had pursued him until finally they had become engaged.

She recalled Grant's tired young face as she had seen it a few hours before. And Nancy was two-timing him because he couldn't take her places! For just a moment Heather allowed herself to be lost in a daydream of how it would seem to be engaged to a man like Grant Burns. Some one dependable, she thought wistfully.

Her next customer was old Doctor Addison, his eyes red-rimmed from loss of sleep, his face pinched-looking and drawn. He pulled off his hat and rubbed his forehead wearily.

"Dick's drunk again, I suppose," he said in a tired voice. "Wish you were a druggist, Heather. I need these prescriptions right away."

"Oh, Dick worked late last night, but I'm expecting him in any minute now," she fibbed loyally. "We'll have the prescriptions delivered before noon."

"Hm-m-m!" snorted the old doctor. "What do you see in him, Heather? You're the prettiest girl in town, and you're going to marry a scamp like Dick Cross!" He looked at her evenly.

She showed him her bare left hand. "But I'm not marrying him," she contradicted. "Which means that I'll be out of a job as soon as the epidemic is over."

"Broken with Dick, have you?" Doctor Addison asked with his booming laugh. "Say, that will make life worth living for at least three of my patients!" he said shyly.

The door opened and Doctor Burns strode in. "My prescriptions gone out yet, Heather?" he asked worriedly.

"I—I'm sorry," she stammered. It wasn't so easy to lie when Grant's blue, piercing eyes were upon her. "Dick worked late last night and he hasn't come in yet."

He frowned. "Funny thing, I thought I saw him more than an hour ago. How are things going with you, doc?"

"Awful!" Doctor Addison answered bluntly. "I haven't had my clothes off in forty-eight hours. I'm going to grab a cup of coffee and then drive over to Turner's. Thad is pretty low."

"Run up to my place. I've got an electric plate and a coffeepot in the back room," Grant offered. "Some things I'd like to talk over with you, too, if you don't mind," he added.

The door closed on Doctor Addison's dragging heels. Grant smiled provocatively into Heather's dark eyes. "You've been a soldier, and nobody seems to be giving you much credit. But I want you to know I think you're pretty swell," he said proudly. "And about Dick—get him on the job if you have to use dynamite. I've got to have those prescriptions."

When he had gone, Heather crossed the store and looked earnestly at her reflection in the mirror behind the soda fountain. Dark eyes set wide apart—hair, pale-gold—a small, pointed face. Nothing spectacular, she thought. Just another pretty girl in a world of pretty girls, even if Doctor Addison had called her the prettiest one in town. But Nancy was that. And Nancy was engaged to Grant. Heather turned sharply away from the mirror, a little afraid of what she might see in her own eyes.

Dick was deep in a drunken stupor. She took him by the shoulder and shook him vigorously. He was as limp as a rag doll. She tried sloshing cold water on his face, but still he slept. Then she slapped him repeatedly with the palm of her hand, until he sat up at last.

"What the——" he began hoarsely.

"Dick—Dick," she cried urgently, "snap out of it. You've got to fill those prescriptions. Both Doctor Burns and Doctor Addison have been in."

"Lemme 'lone." He slid back onto the pillow.

"Dick!" She shook him. "Please—Dick!" she cried tearfully.

She got him on his feet and mixed a bracer. "Here, drink this."

Heather took the empty glass from him. "How do you feel?" she asked anxiously.

"Rotten." He swayed a little on his feet.

"I mean," Heather explained, "do you feel as though you could go ahead with the prescriptions? Is your head clear enough?"

"Sure. Get me some coffee and I'll be all right," he said brusquely. "Black coffee—not dish water. And you might write out the labels for me. I'm too shaky."

"Maybe I'd better go for the coffee instead of phoning," she suggested. "Then it's sure to be strong enough. But I'll write the labels first, so you can get started. You're sure you're all right?" she repeated.

"I could put up old Addison's stuff in my sleep," he snapped.

There were eleven prescriptions in all. Heather wrote out the labels in her neat, round hand as Dick read them to her. She often did that for him. Sometimes she pasted on the labels, too. Then, slipping into her coat, she ran the block to the restaurant.

She was sitting on a stool at the counter talking to Bill, the proprietor, while she waited for the special brew of coffee, when some one in the kitchen screamed. Bill muttered under his breath, and darted through the swinging doors. And as the screams continued, Heather ran into the kitchen, too.

There she found Sadie, the waitress, gripping her right hand with her left. The front of her apron was stained with blood, and her wrist was bleeding profusely. She pulled away from Bill when he tried to help her.

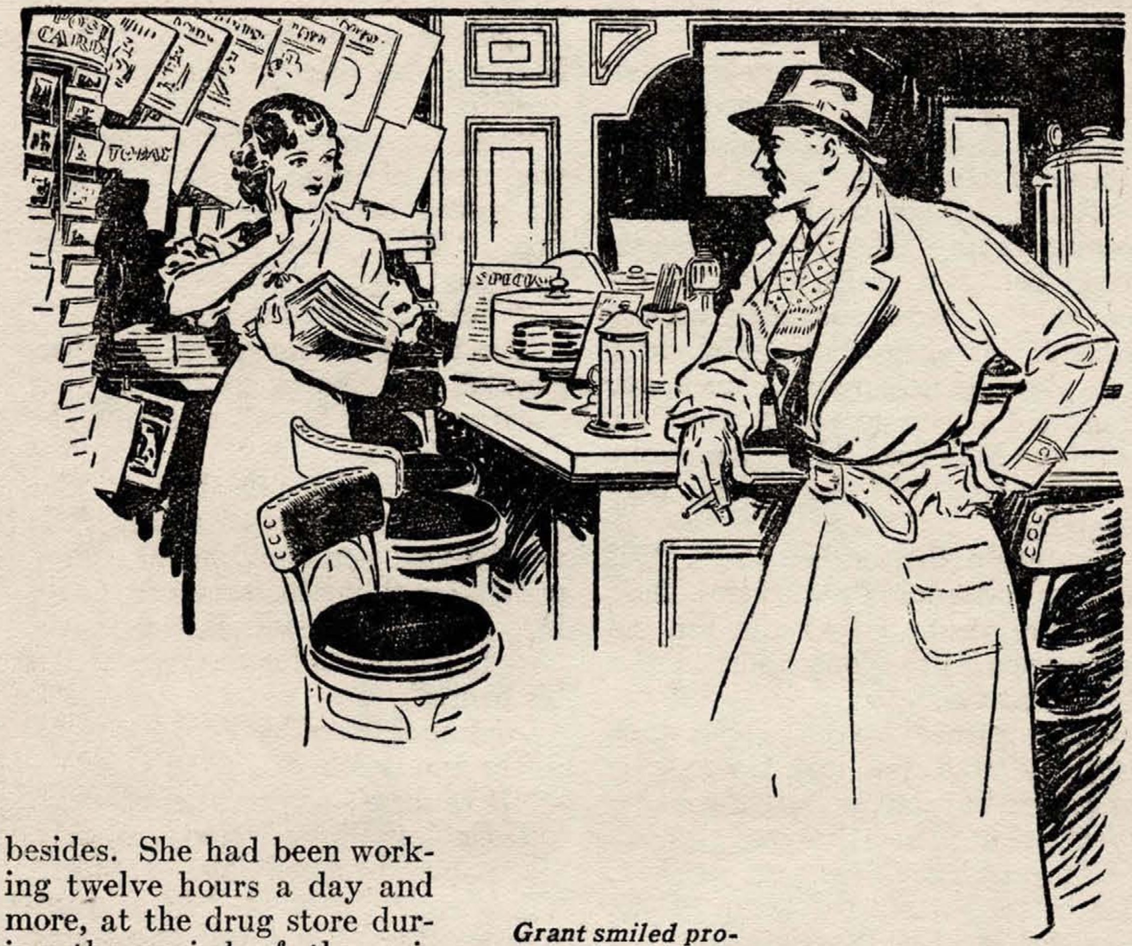
"Doctor Burns is in his office. I'll take Sadie there if you'll rush that coffee over to Dick, yourself," Heather offered.

She pulled a clean handkerchief from her coat pocket, and knotting it around Sadie's right wrist, she made a tourniquet with it. The girl still gripped the palm of her hand, so that Heather could only guess as to the extent of the injury.

Sadie's frightened screams had changed to moans of pain. Heather watched her anxiously as she took her to Grant's office. He was sitting at his desk, head resting on his arms, when they entered. Doctor Addison had already left.

Sadie sank limply into a chair and showed him her hand. "Steady," he whispered tensely, in an aside to Heather. "I'm going to need your help."

Twenty minutes later Grant took Sadie home, and Heather was glad to drop down onto the couch in his back room. She was feeling a little faint herself, and she was dead tired



Grant smiled provocatively into Heather's dark eyes. "I want you to know I think you're pretty swell," he said proudly.

besides. She had been working twelve hours a day and more, at the drug store during the period of the epidemic.

It seemed to Heather that she had only just fallen asleep when she heard some one calling her name, softly, insistently. She tried to open her eyes, to rouse herself, but she was too tired.

Then strong arms lifted her gently, and she burrowed her face against a tweed coat that smelled of tobacco and medicine. The arms tightened about her—arms which made her feel so secure, that even half-awake, she knew they did not belong to Dick. Suddenly her eyes flashed open, and she looked deep into Grant's blue ones. He lowered his head and kissed her. Hungry kisses that filled her with a strange, sweet fire. Without thinking, Heather returned his kisses, pressing her soft lips against his burning ones.

"Heather," Grant whispered. "Heather—dearest."

"But, Nancy——" she whispered back reproachfully.

Grant's arms dropped from her so suddenly that she fell back against the wall. He groaned, and thrust a hand through his light hair.

"Forgive me, Heather, and forget," he cried in despair.

She laid her fingers against her lips to steady them. "But, I can't forget. I—I don't want to," she cried defiantly.

"I ought to be shot," he said savagely. "There's Nancy, and there's Dick——"

"There's only Nancy," Heather

corrected him. "I've definitely broken with Dick."

Grant looked at her quickly, and his face brightened at the good news. But then it clouded slowly, and he continued in a dreary voice:

"I thought my work was all-important in my life, that it always would be. But it isn't, Heather—you are." There was such aching desire in his voice that she made a little pleading gesture with her hand. "I'm fond of Nancy, and it wouldn't be fair to hurt her. What are we to do—you and I?" he asked desperately.

Heather pulled on her coat. "I'll go away. I couldn't work for Dick any more, now. I told him I'm going as soon as the long hours at the store are over."

Grant turned up her collar protectingly, and for just a moment his fingers lingered against the warm smoothness of her throat.

"Two o'clock," he said at last. "I'd better get started on my calls. Good-by, Heather."

She shivered. That good-by sounded so final. "Good-by," she managed, and fled down the stairs to the drug store.

She found Dick in the prescription room, drinking straight whiskey.

"Well," he began savagely, "about time you were getting back."

Heather glanced at the work table. The milk bottle in which Bill had delivered the coffee, and an empty cup stood there. The labels were gone. "Did Chuck Parks take the prescriptions in his car?" she asked worriedly.

Dick jerked his head in assent. "Where have y'been?" he asked brusquely.

She hung up her coat. "Sadie cut her hand badly while I was at the restaurant, and I took her to Gra—Doctor Burns's office. Afterward I meant to rest only a minute while he took her home, but the first thing I knew, I fell asleep," she explained wearily.

"And I'm supposed to believe that you were sleeping all that time?" He pulled his mouth into an ugly line. "About time Nancy Trenton got wise to things, I'd say!"

"Dick!" she cried in horror.

The telephone rang, and Heather, glad of the chance to escape, flew to answer it. The call was from the Trenton home.

"That was Doctor Burns," she told Dick in a startled voice. "He wondered if you could have made a mistake in filling his prescription for Mr. Trenton, or mixed the labels. He's taken a turn for the worse. It's his heart."

Dick moistened his lips. He swore softly and reached for the whiskey.

"If he dies——" Heather stopped.

Dick swallowed convulsively. Then he shrugged his shoulders. "You wrote the labels," he said unconcernedly. "If I tell them that you made a mistake in pasting them on, that let's me out."

Heather stared. horror-stricken. "You wouldn't!" she cried with trembling lips.

Dick grinned unpleasantly. "Burns isn't going to testify that you weren't here when the prescriptions went out. He's not going around telling people that you two were alone in his office for a couple of hours. Not when old man Trenton's money is involved," he cried triumphantly.

She tried to think, but her head was swimming, and she sank down onto the cot.

She mustn't do anything that would hurt Grant professionally, Heather told herself. And if he wanted to clear her, she mustn't let him do it.

"You win," she said dully. "Only, we'd better get both doctors to check over the other prescriptions that went out this morning. If Mr. Trenton did get the wrong bottle, some one has his."

Heather reached Doctor Addison at Carlson's, and he called back an hour later to say that his prescriptions corresponded with their labels. She telephoned Grant at Trenton's, and he said that he would check his. It was nearly five o'clock when he came into the drug store.

"How is Mr. Trenton?" she asked, trying to avoid his compelling gaze.

"Oh, fair, considering. Where's Dick?" he asked lightly.

Heather indicated the back room with a nod of her head. "Drunk," she replied tonelessly. "I'm glad you came in, instead of phoning," she said eagerly. "I want to talk to you."

"That makes it mutual," Grant grinned happily. "Heather, I'm going to kiss that dimple in the corner of your mouth!"

She drew back quickly. "About Mr. Trenton's medicine. It's best that people should think that I made the mistake—that I mixed the labels on the bottles. You're not to tell them that I was with you, instead of Dick, at the time. Nancy——"

"There wasn't any mix-up in labels," he interrupted briskly. "And Dick filled the prescription correctly. It was Nancy who caused her father's heart attack. She was married over in Linwood, to-day. Mrs. Trenton was a little afraid to tell me, under the circumstances. Nancy had telephoned her just before I got to the house. Some fellow from Kansas whom she had met while she was away at school. Mr. Trenton's wild with rage. That's what I meant when I said his condition was fair, considering."

"Oh," Heather breathed faintly. "Married!"

Grant stepped closer and imprisoned her hands. "And now, darling," he cried with a happy smile, "I'm going to kiss that dimple."

"Not here—where everybody can see you," she begged in sudden panic.

"Why not? Broadville and the rest of the world might as well know that I'm crazy about you, and that we're going to be married."

"Well," Heather said demurely, "I do think you might have told me first."

He flashed a teasing, irresistible smile, and drew her into his strong arms. "I love you, Heather," he whispered tenderly. "Let me take care of you, always."

"Always," she answered, clinging to him.

He kissed her eyes with their little shadows of fatigue, the soft hollow of her throat, her warm, sweet lips. When he released her at last, she looked up at him bravely, and smiled into the eyes of the man who promised her unselfish love, and divine happiness.

By Vivian Grey

Little And Lovely

A SERIAL—
Part III.

CHAPTER V.

THE STORY SO FAR: **Sophia Ambler thought herself in love with Vincent Nelson until he introduces her to Rhoda Kinsella and informs her that Rhoda is the "good" type of girl he intends to marry. Lonely, Sophia turns to Arnold Cranston, a playboy, for amusement. She also goes out with her publisher boss, Thursby Linden. She is with him one night when they meet Lisbet, society girl who is in love with Linden. Rhoda, out with Cranston, becomes mixed up in a murder and goes to Sophia for help. The police, thinking Sophia is the woman in the case, refuse to listen to explanations and take her to the station house where she is forced to spend the night.**

IT seemed to Sophia that a night had never been so long. She wondered what Arnold was doing. Had he sobered up? Probably. She knew enough of police methods to know that they probably sobered him forcibly.

Finally faint streaks of light, like the prying fingers of some gaunt skeleton, found their way into her cell. Glad as she was to see the beginning of day, she shrank from those horrible, deathlike fingers that seemed to seek her out only to point jeeringly at her.

It was an eternity before day dawned fully, an eternity shot with strange noises, harsh voices seeming to talk and to no one in particular.

A girl in the cell next to her awakened, stretched, yawned, and then looked across interestedly at Sophia in her transparent pajamas.

"Gee! You weren't caught doing the town in those things, I hope?" she asked finally in a voice that echoed with a strong note of friendliness.

"No, I'd just gone out to the car of a friend parked in front of my place," Sophia explained none too eagerly. She didn't feel like talking.

The girl laughed.

"And they grabbed you! Now wouldn't that be just like some dumb copper! Wasn't doing a thing, I 'spect?"

"No. Just talking to a friend."

"Just like me! Me and my boy friend just happened to be in front of this house talking when the dame inside found she'd been robbed. And we was in for it! It wasn't our fault that some one'd thrown the junk into our car just as we was getting ready to get in and take a drive. I told the copper, but would he listen to that?"

"Innocent as a baby! You tell 'em, Hazel!" came from down the row of cells. And some one laughed in a hard, cruel way.

Sophia felt a little bit sick and dizzy with it all. She was glad when the matron appeared. The woman surveyed her with cold eyes.

"Hope you don't think you can go to court in them things?" she said, indicating the fragile pajamas.

"I wanted the officer to let me change before I came," Sophia replied. "He wouldn't, though."

The woman nodded her head.

"Yeah. Well, they're onto your tricks. Going out in things that ain't decent and then asking to go home to change. This sudden modesty of you dames hands us a laugh! That's what it does. It don't fool nobody!"

Sophia stared at the woman but said nothing. There wasn't any use trying to convince her.

Then, roughly from the matron:

"Well, what're you going to do about it? Got any way of getting decent things to cover yourself with?"

"If you'd let me send to my apartment——" Sophia started to suggest.

"Where is it?" And as Sophia gave the address: "Pretty swell address for a girl that comes here."

But Sophia ignored that and went on to explain to say to any one who answered the door there to send her an ordinary street dress and accessories to go with it.

Sophia was glad, for the clothes that were finally handed to her. She looked them over carefully first, half expecting to find some message in them, some word from Rhoda. But there was none.

She realized, of course, that it might have been intercepted by the matron or almost any one whose hands the things passed through.

She dressed, making herself as presentable as she could with the crude conveniences at hand.

At nine, or thereabouts, she had been told, she would be taken to court for a preliminary hearing.

Sophia had no clear idea of what to do. Her work on the paper had given her an idea of court procedure but her own case seemed so simple that it seemed almost superfluous to even take her to court.

She would need no lawyer, because she had no case to be plead. She would tell her story, and then, of course, they would release her and probably be a little ashamed of having held her overnight.

There was a stirring in the corridor. Sophia heard men's voices.

"Fine hour to get up over some female that's been running wild!"

"Sure it wasn't some female running wild that made you want that extra nap this morning, mayor?" There was laughter in the voice and something about its intonation struck straight to Sophia's heart and set it trembling madly.

She knew those tones!

Hot color rushed to her face. She turned in panic as if seeking some means of escape but, in that narrow cell, found none.

The speakers had stopped in front of her cubicle. They went on talking as if unaware of her:

"You know you're coming up for reëlection next fall," the younger man was saying in an easy assured voice. "And my paper goes into the homes of a lot of your people. I don't like to remind you of that, but it seems necessary right now."

The mayor's fat, ungainly body teetered on its toes. Evidently he was thinking.

"I know," he finally said, "but your paper's always been with my party. Why, you'd lose readers if you swung out of line."

"I can afford to take a chance on that. But you can't afford to take a chance on losing votes," the other man returned crisply.

There was a long silence then which seemed to be tense.

"I know, Linden"—it was the mayor's voice—"but I can't do this. Why, it ain't legal! It ain't according to law!"

Thursby Linden's crisp, clipped-off, sardonic laugh echoed for only a moment in the corridor.

"I've known you to be a little bit careless of the law before, mayor! And this is a case of have to. It's copy marked 'must.' "

"But suppose it gets found out that I came over here and interferred in this case like this—what're people going to think? What's my wife going to think? Yeah, what's my wife going to think of my meddling in the case of a girl like this?" A note of triumph in his voice as if at last he was sure he had found a telling argument.

Once more Sophia, sitting in her cell, her hands clenching, feeling as if she must be going a little bit mad with suspense, heard Linden's laugh.

"That's a good one! Your wife! What do you suppose she'd think if she knew that some of your clothes had been found in the apartment of that cabaret singer who was found murdered the other day? One of my boys did a little sleuthing on his own before even the police got on the job."

"Why, man, that's blackmail!" The mayor's eyes were wide open, and the words came after a moment's silence.

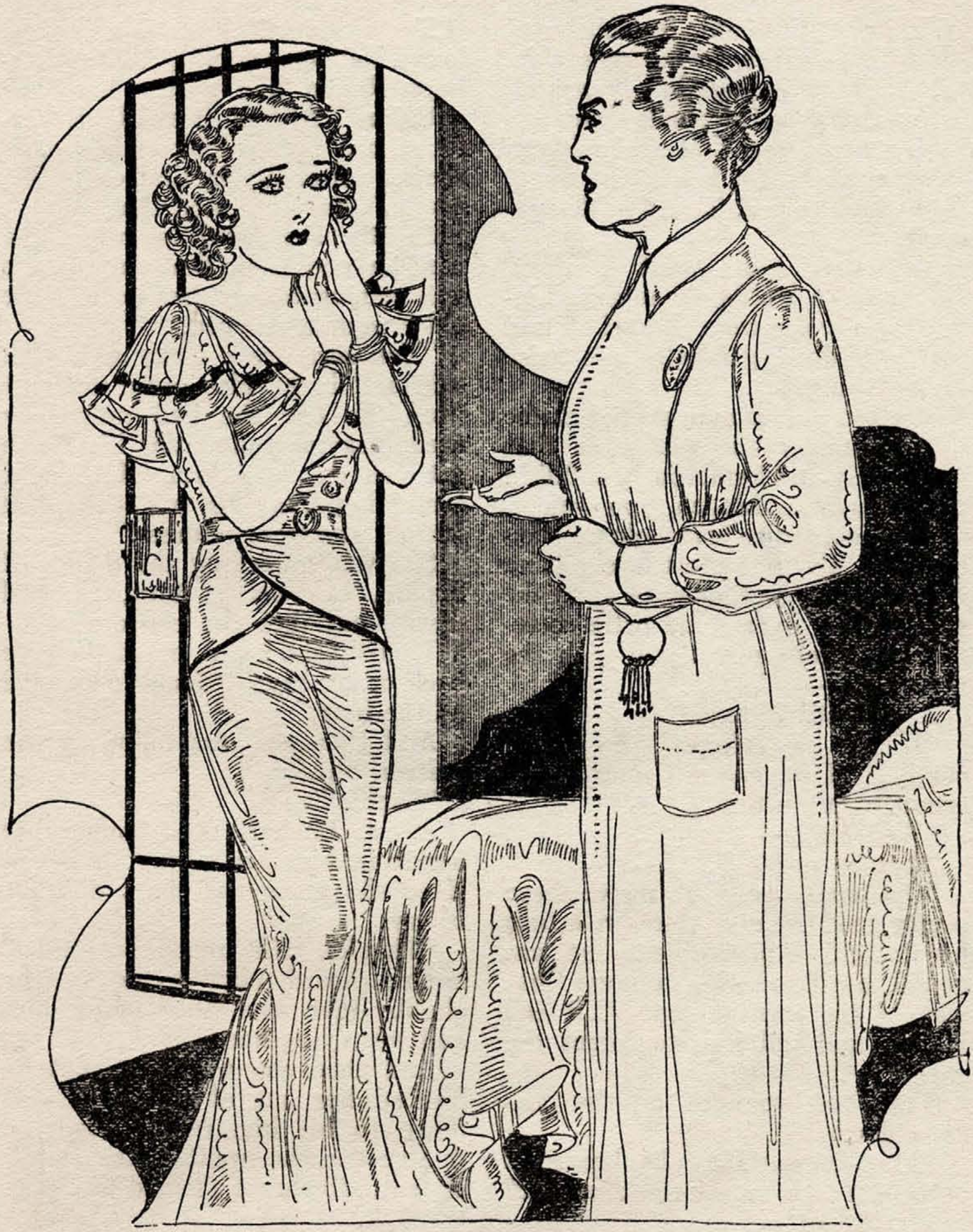
"Oh, no! I wouldn't call it by any such hard name as that. It's—well, merely business."

"I know, but I don't see how I can do this," the mayor stalled.

"Now see here"—Sophia, listening, recognized the note of purpose in Linden's voice—"I want that girl out of here. She can't come up in court. Her name must not get into the papers in connection with this. That's the case. That's what I want of you."

"Well—why, Linden," the mayor was squirming, "I can't interfere with the boys here. You know how we've been trying to make a cleaning up lately. The word's gone out that some one's got to be taken in for every crime reported. We're not going to have a lot of cops walking the streets for nothing. They can at least grab some one that looks suspicious and find something out about 'em, make some attempt to get 'em. And now I can't tell the first man that follows orders to lay off. How would that look?"

"I'm not interested in that,



The matron surveyed Sophia with cold eyes. "Hope you don't think you can go to court in them things!" she said, indicating the fragile pajamas. "Got any way of getting decent things to cover yourself with?"

mayor. I've stated a case and it must go my way."

"Anyway, what's it to you? If she's on the level, she'll get out and if they've really got something on her, why then she ain't safe out. Anyway, she's a secretary in your office, ain't she?" with a shrewd look at the publisher.

Sophia caught the look and

understood it, but somehow it brought no blush to her pale skin. She had the feeling that it was all too unreal, that the whole thing was some strange play that she had been called upon to act in.

She had an odd feeling of detachment.

"I've told you what I want, mayor," the words, coming in Linden's cool voice were clipped off and curt. "I don't generally ask twice for anything."

The too plump man peered at the taller, slimmer one with eyes that were oddly and humorously childish!

"By heaven, Linden, you want a man to jeopardize his whole position in town! I've put effort into getting where I am and now to risk the whole thing over some little secretary that gets into a jam with the boy friend——"

Linden straightened.

"Is this a refusal?" he asked curtly. "I haven't all morning to spend, even on this."

"Well, now——"

"Yes or no?"

"Oh, well, you 'n' me've been pretty good friends! Sure, we'll turn her loose!" And suddenly he was genial, as if granting a favor that was of his own doing. "I'll call Dreher and tell him to forget the case!"

Their feet sounded on the concrete floor.

"That means I'll take her right out with me now—right away?" Linden asked.

"Sure! Sure!" the mayor replied, eagerly willing to go all the way with the favor once he had started.

They disappeared.

Sophia knew that even though Linden had not looked at her once, not met her eyes for even an instant, the two men had been talking about her.

She wondered how Linden had learned about her being there. Perhaps Rhoda had gotten in touch with him. At least it had been tactful of him not to look at her while she sat miserably in that cell. She couldn't have endured that.

Shortly she heard steps in the corridor and knew that the matron was coming toward her door. The older woman stopped.

"You sure are a lucky girl," she said and in a voice quite different from the one she had previously used, "having influential friends to get you out of a jam. I thought something like this might happen when I saw your address."

She was unlocking the door and Sophia, her nerves taut, stepped dizzily out into the corridor.

Vaguely she heard one of the girls back of her say: "Some folks have all the luck."

And then she was following the matron blindly.

"Sophia!"

It was Linden. And Sophia, her hands in his, was trying to laugh, since she knew she must do that or cry.

"Thanks, I'll remember this," Sophia heard him saying to the chubby man who stood beside him and was eying her keenly.

And then she was glad that he hustled her out of the place and down to his big, roomy roadster. She needed the uplift of the luxury of that, after what she had just gone through.

"How did you know?"

They were her first words and it was only with a conscious effort of will that she kept them steady.

"Hick, doing an early round, saw your name and inquired. I nearly passed out when he told me—seemed impossible."

Sophia said nothing for the moment. She was thinking of Hick, lean, lanky, nervous police reporter who worked on a battered old typewriter that no one else could use and always sat face to the wall.

"I'm taking you home now. Would you like to stay there all day and rest? You can have the day off if you want. Perhaps you'd better?"

Sophia thought a moment.

"No," she finally said, "unless you don't want me in the office. I'd rather get back to work." There was something timid and frightened in her voice.

"Want you in the office?" With his characteristic laugh. "We couldn't get along without you! That was why I came down there and insisted upon having you!"

"Then I'll just go home and freshen up and get right to work. I'd rather."

"Fine!"

Linden didn't ask her anything about what had happened. Sometimes Sophia was glad and then the next moment she longed to tell him all about it and ask him what he knew of Arnold's fate and that of the other man in the case.

She wanted to talk. It would have relieved her. And yet she felt she had no right to put the burden of her confidences on Linden.

Perhaps he wouldn't want to be that much drawn into the affair. Because Sophia knew enough of police procedure to know that even though she had been released and was driving away, free, with her chief, there would still be more to the case.

Just what direction the rest would take she couldn't even guess. But that it was not finished she knew.

Linden stopped the car directly in front of St. Mark's and was out instantly, attending her as if she might have been a queen of the realm.

The telephone girl looked up at her casually; there was no knowledge of what had happened in her calm and friendly eyes!

"The young lady left your key in your box, Miss Ambler," she said.

"Oh, thanks, such a lot!" leading the way to her apartment door.

She was a little bit surprised that Linden accepted her invitation to come in and wait while she changed. Ordinarily he was at his desk at that hour immersed in flimsy, for while he did none of the actual editing himself, he kept in close touch with incoming news—wire and local.

He said nothing until she emerged from the bath-dressing room, in fresh clothes and smiling faintly.

"That was quickly done!" Sophia was glad that he injected nothing personal into the moment. So far he had not asked her one question or uttered one word of sympathy.

It was better that way, for she knew that the first word of sympathy would have broken the dam that was holding back her tears. It would have been easy to break down and she didn't want to.

Linden was on his feet, leading the way to the door, locking it and handing her the key.

In his car they turned directly toward the office.

At the curb he paused a moment before getting out and turned to Sophia.

"No one at the office knows anything about this, except Hick, so there'll be no explanations."

And for that, too, Sophia was grateful.

At first it seemed to her that it would be almost too difficult to take her place at her desk and go through the routine of the day, but as she fell into line of duty it was the hours previous that began to seem impossible and dreamlike to her.

She felt as if it must have been some other girl who had rushed madly out in the night to try to rescue Arnold Cranston and had only succeeded in getting herself dragged into difficulty.

Occasionally her thought lingered for a moment on Arnold. She worried a little about him. And yet she knew that he had so often run afoul of the police during his drinking that it would probably be nothing new or alarming to him.

In the evening she would get in touch with him, or he might even be waiting for her.

Rhoda, of course, had saved her own skin. There was nothing there to worry about.

But instead of going straight home as she had planned when her office hours were over, Sophia found Linden standing at her desk.

"You're having dinner with me tonight," he said. "If you have any other arrangements, please call them off. This is important."

There was something like fright in Sophia's eyes as she looked up at him. The earnestness of his voice had alarmed her. He didn't generally speak to her that way.

"Certainly—why, I'll be glad to!" she replied, not quite steadily. "Would you—could we stop at the apartment so I could change?"

A little grin twisted Linden's lips as he looked down at her.

The dark silk of her suit looked as fresh as the moment she had put it on. Her soft honey-colored hair waved beautifully under her trim little hat.

"You look perfect as you are," he said.

"Then that's all that's neccessary! On our way!"

They drove uptown and along the Drive, where Sophia looked down on water that reflected a calm summer twilight sky. She remembered that other evening when they had been driving along there and had seen the blonde whose sharp anger had sent Linden home in a blue funk.

Sophia wondered what that girl was doing on that evening, why Linden was out without her.

Probably she had one of those swell dates that Linden so disliked in summer.

They were threading their way through narrow Riverdale Avenue in Yonkers, and then up through wide and beautiful North Broadway and on to the open road.

They drove miles without a word and yet there was no strain in the silence. Their companionship seemed to be the sort that had no need for words. It was an easy thing that blended well with a summer evening after a hard day.

Through Tarrytown and the rolling hills of Ossining. On to Harmon and down a steep hill flanking the property of one of the former and well-known wives of a theatrical producer, to turn sharply right and bring up at the door of an inn around which the Croton River winds with lazy grace.

There, with the car drawn close to the evergreens flanking the door, Linden dropped the evening paper, still damp from the press when they started, in Sophia's lap.

"Seen it?" he asked.

"No."

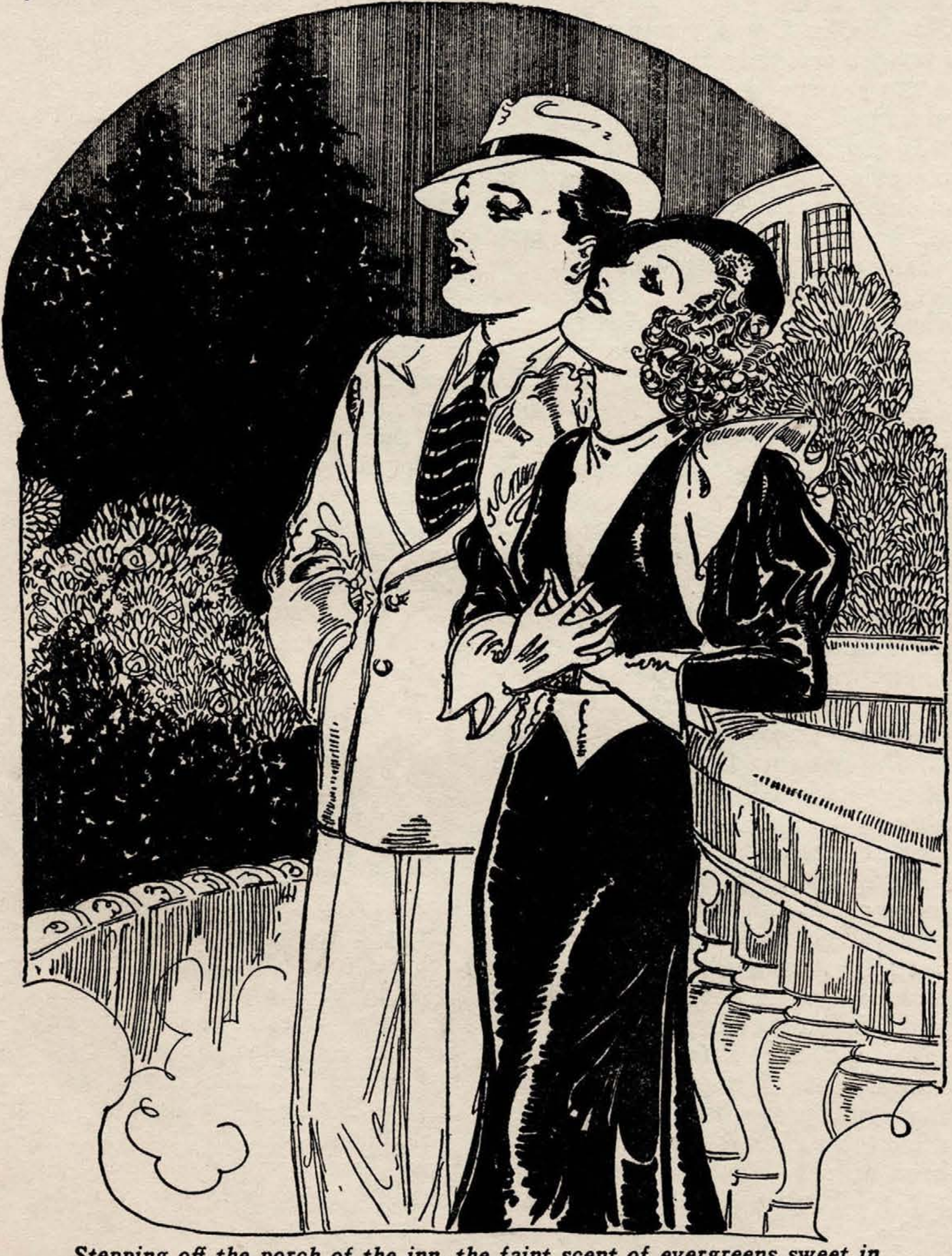
"Better look at it then."

Sophia opened it and stared at the front page. She felt the color draining from her face.

"This"—she asked in a strained voice—"is what you brought me out here for?"

"Partly." His voice was natural. "Only partly. I do want to talk to you about this. But"—and he was smiling gently as he bent to take the keys from the car—"I wanted the pleasure of this evening with you more."

Sophia felt a smile curving her lips in spite of the terrific beating of her heart.



Stepping off the porch of the inn, the faint scent of evergreens sweet in her nostrils, Sophia was held by the sheer beauty of the night. Linden seemed to sense her mood. "Beautiful, isn't it?" he murmured.

"Thanks," she said.

"Thank yourself for being such a comfortable person to know."

"I'm not sure that's a compliment."

"It is, in this day and age, lady fair! It certainly is!"

They were out of the car and walking into the restaurant.

Linden, who evidently knew the place, led the way to a small private dining room at the right.

The room drew a gasp of surprised admiration from Sophia.

Its walls in Japanese scenes were almost startling in an electric, icy sort of blue, its woodwork black enamel touched with gold, and its windows hung with gold-toned fabric that gave an effect of perpetual sunshine; its furniture black lacquer.

Linden caught Sophia's look of startled and wondering admiration. He laughed softly.

"Now, I haven't that purpose in mind at all! If I ever make love to you it will be honest love, probably in an early-American setting. It seems more respectable!"

"I'm not sure that you're not one of those wicked men that one hears about. I've never seen a place like this before!"

And instantly Sophia was conscious of the fact that she had said something that might have been better left unsaid. There was a strange tenseness in the atmosphere and Linden was leaning across the table toward her with an air reminiscent of a certain few mad moments in the dusk of her apartment that Sophia had never quite been able to forget.

"No, Sophia," he was saying in that warm, glowing voice that seemed to light fires within her own blood, "you haven't seen this place before! There are a great many places you haven't seen, things you haven't done that I'd like to take you and do with you! With a girl like you beside him, a man——" he paused as if just realizing that his emotion was running away with him.

And Sophia sat opposite him, motionless. A spell seemed to have been cast over her in that moment and she forgot everything except that Thursby Linden, who had once called her "little and lovely," sat opposite her and that his voice was echoing to the very uttermost reaches of her heart.

And then he was talking again and in his thoroughly businesslike tone:

"But we didn't come here to be romantic, young lady, however easy it may be, with the Croton River winding down there below us and gold fish lazing in the water! I want to talk to you about last night."

Sophia looked up at him, her eyes apprehensive and very young in their fright.

"Don't be frightened," Linden said. "I'm standing by and with all the confidence in the world in you, little lady. I just want to know what really happened last night. I have the garbled police version but I want the real one."

And so, while their dinner was brought to them, Sophia told him the story of the night before, beginning at the place where she sat in the garden in her pajamas enjoying the cool, starlit night.

"I see," Linden said as she finished. "And you don't want this girl Rhoda brought into it because you don't want Vincent Nelson hurt?" He was looking away and there was an odd note in his voice.

"No," Sophia murmured quietly.

"You realize, of course, that there's going to be considerable fuss kicked up over the disappearance of the girl from the car. Of course, it will never get out that they had one girl jailed for her. The mayor couldn't explain his part in it and neither could any one else. But they're going after that girl pretty hard. There'll be orders given to let you alone, but under pressure the police who picked you up may disregard those orders and come after you personally to try to get something on you. Don't you think then that it would be better to get this Rhoda to come clean? Cranston won't talk—not as long as she's out of the picture he says, and he's apparently a man of his word."

Sophia thought a minute.

"I can't drag Rhoda into it—not unless she comes forward herself with her story."

"You're foolish, because she won't. You're risking things. I'll protect you as much as I can, but there may be a limit to what I can do."

"I'll—I'll risk it," she murmured.

"And there's another phase of this. Since the paper came out the dead man has been identified as Jack Maddern, member of the wealthy Maddern family. He was to be put in control of a beer syndicate—rather had just been given the job. That means the Maddern money will be spent in trying to clean this up, little girl. It doesn't look too good. I feel like putting it to you that it's your duty to put the investigators on the right road by telling them what you know."

"But they wouldn't believe me," she said, her slim white hands moving in a gesture of emptiness.

"With the other girl to question they would."

"You think it's really my duty?"

"Unquestionably. Your duty to the family of the dead man—any honest citizen's duty. I had this in mind when I got you released this morning."

"The only way I'd want to do it," came thoughtfully from Sophia, "would be by telling her and having her go to the authorities herself."

"That would be the nicest way to do it." There was admiration in the fine dark eyes with which he looked at her.

For a moment it seemed to Sophia that her hands would have to go out across the linen tablecloth to him, to be held in his. But he made no move toward her, so she sat motionless, waiting for the riot of emotion within her to subside.

"I'll do it then," she said in a barely audible voice when she dared trust herself to speak.

"The sooner the better."

"To-morrow evening."

"Make it noon. Have a luncheon date with her and stay as long as you wish. Get your point over, though, before you leave it. It's imperative." And his voice was all business again and his eyes had cooled.

Sophia felt a distinct sense of let down and chided herself for it. She had no right to mistake his interest in her! She was being utterly foolish!

"I'll try to."

"That's the stuff!"

The dregs of coffee in their cups had long ago grown cold. Linden signaled the waiter and paid the check.

CHAPTER VI.

Outside a soft, fitful summer shower had rustled through the trees and shrubbery and spangled them with glistening jewels. Summer evening, with a sky set with a million stars, was folding gently down over the earth—a thing of soft shadows and gentle breezes, of low murmurings.

Stepping off the porch of the inn, the faint scent of evergreens sweet in her nostrils, Sophia was held by the sheer beauty of it.

City people missed so much, she thought.

Never to know the faint sounds of summer evening in the country, the soft sighing of wind in the trees, the vagrant scents of sleeping flowers, the whir of wings in the dusk—almost that was never to live!

Linden seemed to sense her mood.

"Beautiful, isn't it?" And there was that in his voice that made it seem as if his arms had reached out for her and then dared not claim her, and had drawn suddenly back again.

Sophia knew a sense of chill and of hurt. A strange aloneness that almost frightened her.

And then, with an almost actual physical effort she shook it off. Foolish to miss his caresses when they had never been hers and never had or could mean anything to her! Foolish to let their omission make her feel so deserted and alone!

And then she was sitting in the car and Linden was slipping in beside her and behind the wheel.

She wondered if his hands actually trembled a little as they took the wheel or if she only imagined that. The light was so uncertain.

"I'd like to go the other way instead of back to town," Linden said in a low voice as the motor started.

Sophia was looking out into the night and echoing his thought a thousandfold, too poignantly to speak, so she merely turned and smiled at him.

"Laughing at me, aren't you, lady fair?" And he had broken the spell and was Thursby Linden, the great publisher again.

But it wasn't so easy for Sophia. Laughing at him! As if she could when suddenly she knew that her heart ached with a strange emptiness, because his arms had failed to do what his voice had hinted.

"I hope I haven't kept you from some other date to-night," he said after a short silence. "I had to have this out with you, though. I want to know that you're going to be clear of things yourself."

"No, I hadn't any other date. I was glad when you asked me."

Linden turned to her sharply for a moment.

"Were you?" And once more it seemed that something infinitely sweet and close hung in the air, something that Sophia wanted to snatch and hold against her heart and never let it go.

But a moment later his attention was on the road again and Sophia was contenting herself with looking at the river which stretched out toward the city like a path of silver.

As they drove along and the night grew darker the stars overhead were like brittle crystal against the dark-blue velvet of the sky and summer night scents assailed her nostrils.

It was all so beautifully dreamlike. It didn't seem possible that there was the city to go back to with its heat and duty.

Sophia felt the air on her face grow gradually warmer as they approached the city until finally, it seemed to be fanned from huge radiators.

It was over all too quickly—that glimpse of country in mid-summer.

"It's been lovely," she said to Linden as he crossed the sidewalk with her toward the entrance of the group of buildings in which was her tiny apartment.

He smiled down at her. Sophia could just see his eyes gleaming in the soft light.

"Not half so lovely as you've been," he said.

She felt suddenly foolishly wordless. She knew that she should have some light flippant reply for that, but none came to her vivid lips. A thing that usually was easy for her was suddenly impossible.

She looked up at him as they stood at the door of her studio. Her wide and lovely gray eyes met his dark ones just as their wistfulness was at its peak.

"Sophia!"

It came from him a trace huskily as she swung the door back and said gayly:

" 'Won't you come into my parlor?' said the spider to the fly." And she would have given worlds to have recalled those words then, just after her name had come from his lips sounding so like a prayer!

"I can't think of anything nicer at the moment." He was once more the perfectly controlled publisher, lighting a cigarette with fine nonchalance, while Sophia's lips trembled over it and her breath came almost too unevenly to draw.

But he seemed not to notice and with a perfectly steady hand lifted the match to his own cigarette.

"Sweet little place you've got here," he said after they'd sat for a moment of silence.

"I like it."

And it seemed to Sophia such silly conversation, such foolish meaningless words to say when there was really so much that she wanted to say to him.

But something had happened to the evening. That whimsical mood of romance that had seemed to hang so tenderly near their grasp on several occasions eluded them entirely for the remainder of the evening and Sophia held out her hand with prim formality as Linden rose to go.

"It's been lovely this evening," she heard herself saying with strained formality when she wanted to say so many other things. "And it's wonderful of you to have interested yourself in me, helped me so to-day. I don't know what would have happened to me otherwise." And she was looking up at him very earnestly.

But Linden brushed it all aside with an easy laugh.

"Nonsense, child! You'd always get by—anywhere, anytime!" And then: "But don't fail to take care of that other matter to-morrow—the other girl."

Sophia wondered if he'd even heard her reply, so casual and careless was his leaving.

She turned back to her room with an oddly unfinished, uncomfortable feeling. He'd been so casual and as for herself—— She couldn't quite understand.

She had supposed all along she had been in love with Vincent Nelson, and yet it took only the nearness of Linden—since that first evening—to set her very blood on fire, to start a thousand wistful dreams in her heart.

And his leave-taking had been so casual!

Yet he had troubled to come and get her that morning, had put himself in a position of obligation for her! Surely that meant something! There were other girls in the office who could take his dictation almost as well as she could.

Her brain was chaotic that evening as she turned to her bed. One thing stood out—even over and above her charge to see Rhoda on the morrow—Thursby Linden had spoken her name with emotion weighting his voice!

She held the memory of that close against her heart. Whatever else might come, she would always have that.

And with all the shadow that hung over her, knowing well that she was the mysterious girl who figured in the newspaper story of the murder, Sophia Ambler slept with a smile curving her colorful lips.

The man she loved had betrayed his own emotion in the speaking of her name! Her heart sang at that. New hope filled it.

And she loved him. She was finally ready to admit that.

Her sleep that night was dream-ridden. Blondes with clear, high, haughty voices passed swiftly through her dreaming in high powered limousines and looked back angrily, men drank too much and then staggered crazily to cars which they smashed into other cars.

And Sophia awakened herself from sleep with her own cry of fright at a collision of dreamed automobiles.

She went back to sleep only to dream again of hysterical girls crying, begging to be spared the consequences of their own folly.

Sophia wasn't much rested when she awakened to the light of another day.

But she dressed with more care than usual. It seemed imperative that she look well. Thursby Linden would be at the office, at the desk next to hers.

He glanced up but with only a cool "good morning," as she took her place near him and she felt as if her heart was sinking untold miles.

It was at noon that he seemed to really realize her presence. She was standing at her desk putting on her hat to go to lunch.

"You're to take your time today," he said in a voice that held a note of gentleness. "Be sure to take care of that matter."

"I will. And thanks." She looked down at him, her wide gray eyes grateful. Surely he must care, she thought, what happened to her.

She had called Vincent's office and made the date with Rhoda through him. Vincent had not even talked to Rhoda about it—so sure was he of her doing what he asked.

"Tell her it's important," Sophia had added just before she hung up.

And so Rhoda appeared at Sophia's apartment a bit defiantly.

"You might have at least asked for me," she said nastily.

Something flamed within Sophia at the words. She had intended to be kind to the girl. All her anger at Vin had died out and seemed to leave her with no reason to be anything but kind and understanding to a girl who found herself in an unreckoned difficulty.

But Rhoda's words swept all her kind intentions before them like so much sun-baked chaff in a strong wind.

"Because I knew you wouldn't come if I did," she said coldly. "I knew that with Vin aware of the date you'd have to keep it or explain things to him. And that might be difficult!"

"I don't know what you're talking about!"

Sophia stared at the girl.

"I'm talking about the night before last," she finally said.

Rhoda shrugged her shoulders.

"That doesn't mean anything to me!"

Sophia wondered if she was hearing aright or if it was all some strange dream. Rhoda who, the last time she had seen her, was cringing and begging for protection, was suddenly coldly defiant.

"Perhaps you think it doesn't," Sophia said after a little silence. "But that isn't all cleared up. If you've read the papers you know that Arnold's in a jam, a bad one, and won't talk." She waited, half expecting Rhoda to speak but when no word came from the other girl: "It's up to you to do something."

"I haven't anything to do with—I'm not doing anything!"

"You haven't anything to do with it? Rhoda!" Sophia exclaimed, scarcely able to believe that she had heard aright.

"Of course not! No one knows that I was even out with Arnold that night! Why should I voluntarily step into such a mess?"

"Because"—the word coming slowly as she tried to understand the other girl's code—"you are the only one who can tell what happened, who can put the seal of truth on Arnold's story that he was at certain places that night with you, drinking, when Maddern was killed. They know how long he had been dead when they found him. If Arnold can prove that he had only reached that spot a few moments before he was found there, he'll be all right. Otherwise——" she paused dreading to say the words that came to her mind. "Don't you see what you can do for him? You can save Arnold from——"

"That's ridiculous!" the other girl broke in. "Arnold has money, let him spend it getting out! Why should I risk my position, risk losing Vin just to save him? To spare him a little trouble? It means my whole life. I'm not going to do it; and if that's what you called me here for, you've just wasted a good lunch!"

They were at the table and Sophia was pouring tea from the quaint orchid pot.

"Oh, no, I haven't," Sophia said. "Suppose I tell what I know? I will, if I have to."

"What you know!" Derisively. "What good would that do! What do you know, after all?"

"About your coming in here that night as you did."

There was a little pause during which the girls eyed each other and seemed to match purpose. It was Rhoda who broke the silence and startlingly:

"I'd say you lied."

Her words dropped into the silence of the room like particles of ice falling on cold concrete.

Their chill seemed to go through to the very bones of Sophia. She shivered as she looked into the opaque eyes of the girl opposite her. She had the feeling of being in some strange and horribly unreal dream.

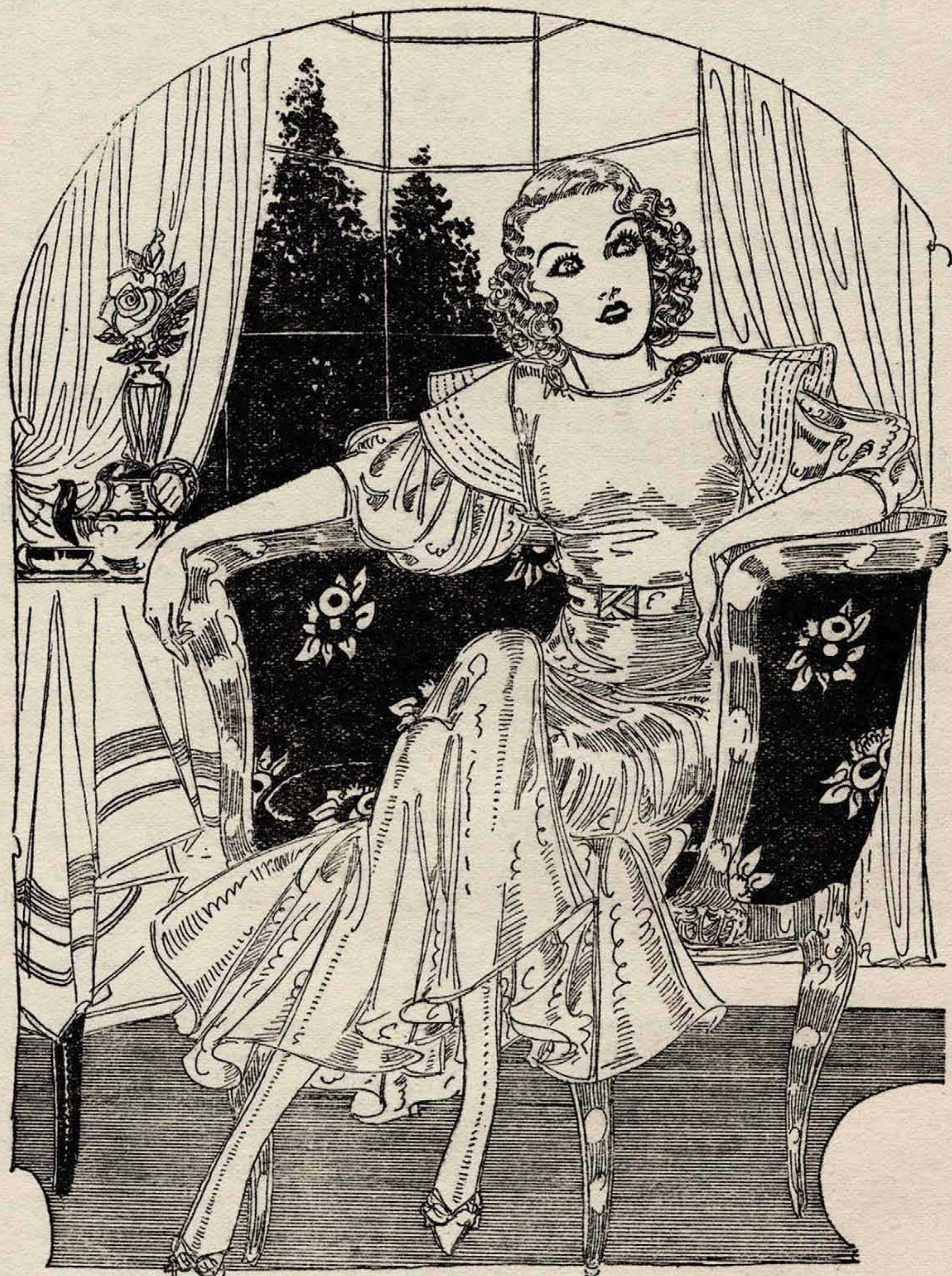
This couldn't be the girl Vincent Nelson had paragonized. He had said she was good. Good!

"And who would there be to prove that I wasn't telling the truth?" Rhoda was going on. "People would believe me before they would you. It pays to have a good reputation, you know!"

Sophia gasped at the words and stared at the other girl as if she was discovering a new kind of human.

"I'm not going to sacrifice myself for Arnold Cranston!" Rhoda continued. "Why should I?"

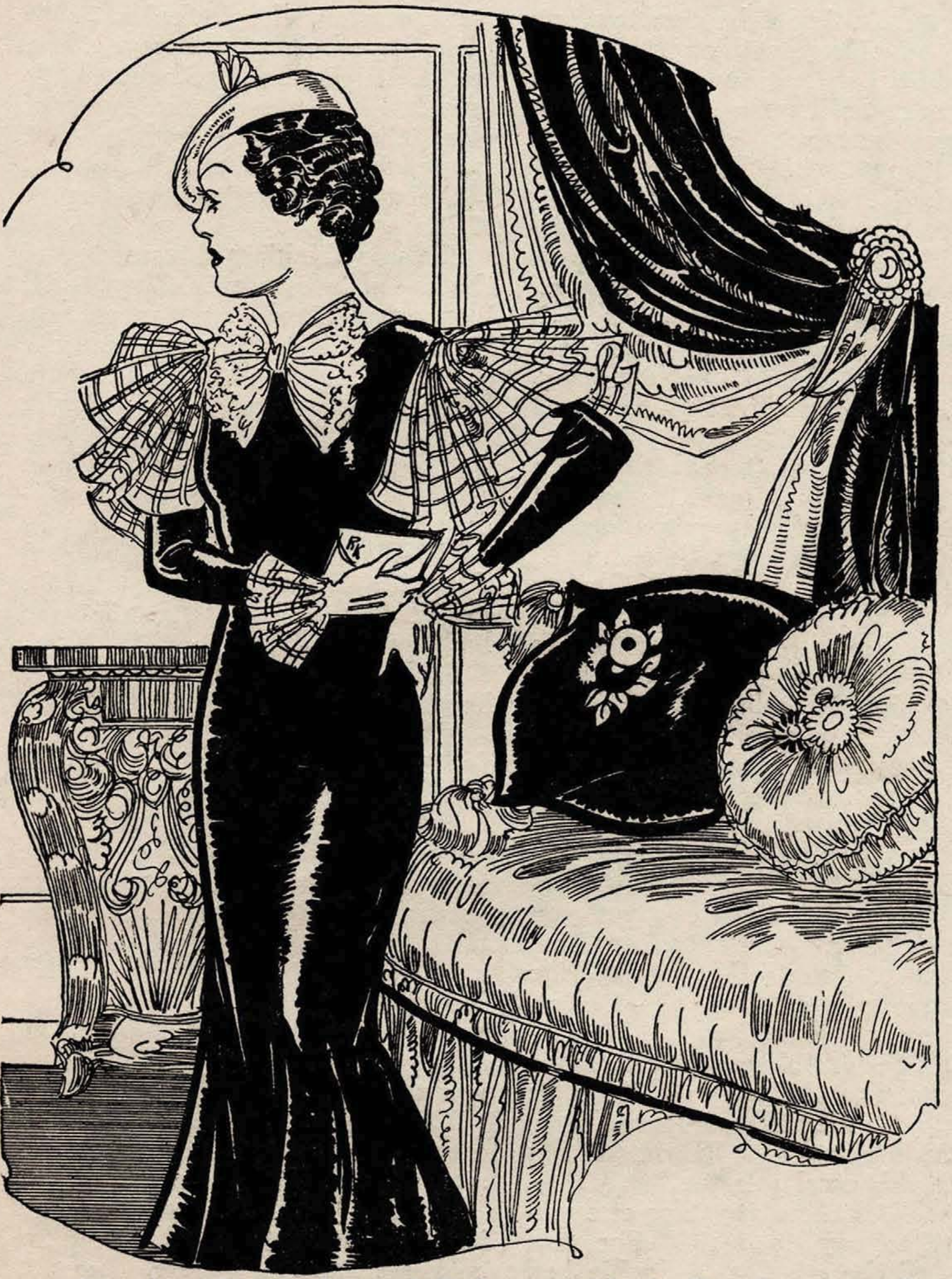
"You wouldn't be sacrificing yourself. You'd only be helping Arnold, getting him out of a jam, releasing him from all connection with that car in which Maddern was found. It's mad of even the police to link him with Maddern's death, but they've got to pin the thing on some one and Arnold happened to be the



person who was handy. He's being made a goat of! Don't you see? Don't you want to help him?"

"Make a goat of myself to help him?"

"But you wouldn't be," Sophia persisted. "I should think you'd welcome a chance to test Vincent's fondness of you. If he wouldn't stand by you through this, do you



"People used to test love and all that sort of bunk. Nowadays you grab what you can get and let the testing go! I happen to want Vincent. Vin's going to be somebody some day and I'm going to be the wife of that somebody!"

think he'll stand by through the rest of your life?"

Rhoda laughed unpleasantly.

"This isn't an old-fashioned novel, Sophia!" she said. "People used to do those things. Test love and all that sort of bunk. Nowadays you grab what you can get and let the testing go! And I happen to want Vincent. Do you think I want to work at a typewriter all my life? Not so's you'd notice it! And Vin's going to be somebody some day and I'm going to be the wife of that somebody!"

"And you're letting things like that keep you from being honest about Arnold?" There was unbelief in Sophia's voice. It was almost impossible that Rhoda, who had been worrying over a nephew being out at night, could be so hard and callous.

"It isn't a matter of that—it's what's going to happen to me that I'm thinking of. I can't afford to do anything different than I am."

"Then I suppose," Sophia began in a lower tone, "that it would be just as useless to tell you that I'm in the jam almost as badly as Arnold is? Mr. Linden has gotten me out. I spent a night in a cell for you. It's pretty indefinite whether I'll stay out or not."

Rhoda paused on that for a moment. Then:

"Surely if your boss"—with a peculiar intonation –"can get you out, he has influence enough to keep you out. And that should be enough for you. Let people stew in their own juice, I say! If Arnold hadn't been drinking so much they'd believe what he says and he'd be all right. He needs a lesson!"

"So do a lot of us, Rhoda, but not quite this cruel a lesson."

"Well, is there anything else you want to say to me?" She had finished the crisp salad Sophia had put before her.

"Would there be any use saying anything else to you?"

"Not if it's along the line you have been talking."

Sophia sat staring out the low windows at the back of her apartment, windows that looked out onto the garden she loved, the pool where fish that she had actually made friends with, moved like darts of gold, the trees and privet that swayed in every breeze that passed but she saw none of the beauty of it.

She was thinking of a number of things—of love and the things it did to people. Rhoda cheating cruelly and calling it love. The exquisite blonde polluting Linden's leisure hours with "musts," and calling it love.

"Love" was a word, she decided, that could mean almost anything—or nothing at all.

"Well?" It was Rhoda smiling faintly, a tinge of triumph in the smile. She evidently felt that she had won her point.

Sophia looked up at her, studying her face intently for an instant.

"Well, nothing, I guess," she said finally. "There just isn't any more! Everything's been said that can be. I don't know what next." And then she paused a moment, a strange little smile twisting her vivid lips as an idea, rather a memory, came to her. She said:

"You're getting away with this just as you got away with that story about the attempt at kidnaping you, aren't you? Or, at least, you think you are."

It startled Rhoda for a moment, caught her off guard, but only for a moment. She grinned.

"Well, it worked anyway, didn't it?" she asked. "Vin didn't let me go home alone any more. I'm not so dumb, after all!"

"Pretty cheap stuff though." A trace of loathing in her voice as she thought back to the night Rhoda had told that far-fetched tale.

"Well, all's fair in love and war, ole dear! And this was both! It worked just as what I'm doing now will work!"

"I hope you know what you're talking about."

"Is that all you wanted of me?"

"Yes, that's all," Sophia replied quietly, not looking at the girl.

"Well"—with an attempt at airiness—"thanks for a nice lunch!" Rhoda stood at the door a moment and waited for a reply. Then when none came she closed it and passed on out into the heat of mid-afternoon.

Sophia in the cool dimness of her apartment looked at the clock on the high old mantel.

Half past two! They had sat long at lunch and accomplished nothing.

She must get back to the office.

She was just rising, ready to powder her nose and put on her hat, when the telephone tinkled.

Something about the sound breaking into the quiet of that hour startled her, though actually there should be nothing alarming about the ringing of one's telephone. That is what one had it for!

She answered it and started a little at the voice that she heard.

She listened a moment.

"But I can come," she said.

"No, don't," Linden said crisply. "I'd rather you wouldn't. I've gotten wind of something. Don't be alarmed. I can handle it—but please don't come to the office."

"All right, if you say so." And she knew that Thursby Linden must have heard the tremor of fear in her voice, for his reply came quickly:

"I'll be there in as near an hour as I can make it. Meantime, don't let any one in unless you know them."

"All right."

Sophia's slim white hands were icy as she turned from the telephone. Fear clutched at her heart like a strangling hand.

And then she tried to laugh at herself. What, after all, had she to fear? She had done nothing. Quite accidentally she had become entangled in a crime but she had no part in it.

She was even free. Not even out on bail. So what had she to fear!

She tried to laugh herself out of the strange mood that had suddenly possessed her. She scoffed at herself. Why she hadn't even the courage of Rhoda!

Rhoda laughed at the whole thing and she was really a part of it!

She flayed herself for a craven.

But her hands trembled as she washed and put away the dishes and some of the fine china showed nicks as it was put back on the shelf. Sophia turned from it ruefully. She had loved that set—orchid, and thin as an eggshell. Against her soft green linens it looked like an exquisite garden.

She slipped out of her office clothes and into a soft eggshell white with a stunning sash of black.

If Thursby Linden was coming to see her, no use of reminding him of the office. And it was nice to dress up for a change—nice, she realized, to dress up for him.

But still her hands trembled a little over the fastening of the smart, heavy sash.

It was longer than an hour before Linden appeared and when finally he did, Sophia knew a sense of relief.

At least with him there nothing could happen.

"It was nice of you to let me have the afternoon off. It's so warm," she said, after all her fever of anticipation, falling back into the employee-and-employer attitude.

She had wanted just for that once

with him to live up to the dress she had put on. And then failed.

"I think I was doing myself a favor in giving myself the opportunity to come here," he said, settling in a comfortable chair, lighting his cigarette and then sitting back to look admiringly at her. "I wonder if you have any idea of how charming you are?"

"I wouldn't mind a bit being told!" With an audaciousness that doubly enhanced her fragile loveliness.

Thursby Linden's dark eyes were warm with something more than admiration as he looked at her. He bent and caught her hand as she passed him and, staying her progress, lifted it to his lips.

"We'll come to that later. I always like to leave the nicest things until last. Right now we have something rather serious to talk about. Don't get frightened," as he saw the dark points of alarm widen her lovely gray eyes. "I just want to put you on your guard, lady fair, so that we can give you the maximum protection."

"Protection from what?"

"Well"—and he was trying to laugh slightly at the thing—"from this sort of thing."

He rose, moved to the studio couch where she sat and dropped down beside her and held out a bit of paper upon which words were crudely printed.

"I don't know how much there is to this," he said, well concealing the alarm that he felt. "But it's best not to miss any bets in a thing like this. We've got a new kind of criminal to deal with nowadays. A new sort of desperation, more petty and still worse to deal with. A thing that stoops to a depth of vicious cruelty that normal people can't quite conceive of. I'm telling you this, Sophia, not to frighten you but just to put you on your guard—very much on your guard."

Sophia took the piece of paper and looked up at the man forcing a brave little smile to her lips:

"I'm not afraid, mister!" With a funny little swagger of bravado. "Bring on your bold, bad men!"

But her pale face became even a shade paler as she read the crude words on the soiled paper.

She looked up at Linden speechless.

"A kid, a little street urchin, brought that into the office straight to my desk this noon, shortly after you'd gone. He scooted past every barrier—no one could stop him—barefoot and ragged!—and came straight to my desk. Some one had put him wise as to just where to come with that. And you, little lady, evidently were shadowed this noon as was your guest!"

"No!" Startled, the word burst from her lips.

"I'm afraid so. Whoever it was who murdered young Maddern knows that I'm here right now!" he said quietly. And it was then that Sophia noticed that he had been speaking in a very subdued tone since his arrival at the apartment.

"But you have nothing to do with it—we have nothing to do with it!"

"I know, child, but they've got a goat there—Arnold Cranston—and they don't want your story to release him and set the police on the trail of the real killers. Coppers get funny when they're driven by the chiefs. And there's been a drive lately—a hard one. Higher-ups have been criticized because murderers, thieves, and kidnapers have been getting away with their swag and no one has been caught. The higher-ups have brought pressure to bear and the result is that the cops are going to bring in some one for every crime now. As long as they have some one to pin a thing to they won't make much of an effort to get any one else. As long as they can hold Cranston there everything will be hunky-dory. Cranston's pretty much alone in the world. There's no one turning heaven and earth to get him out—poor bird. And he's evidently too much of a man to give this other girl away."

"But he will give her away when he realizes how serious it's going to be with him!"

"I'm not so sure," he replied, in a tone as if he himself wondered at the fellow. "I've been looking into that and the strange part of it is that he's fallen into an attitude of not caring. He seems to feel his life isn't worth mixing other people up in trouble and so he isn't saying a word!"

"But he can't do that! Why, it's crazy of them to accuse him—crazy! There isn't a bit of evidence that points to him!"

"Of course there isn't. The case against him is as full of holes as a sieve. There just isn't any case against him! But what difference does that make? Until some one else shows up they've got him and the wheels of justice are moving along and, of course, the time will come when it will be too late to do anything even if any one would."

Sophia stared. Her eyes were wide with horror. It seemed impossible that her innocent hurrying across the street that night could have resulted in so much turmoil.

It seemed impossible that the processes of law and the thing called justice could be so weird.

There was nothing sane or sensible about holding Arnold!

Any one could see that. But the trouble was no one wanted to—that is, no one who mattered.

Sophia looked down then, again, at the note in her hand.

She shivered as if a cold wind had blown over her and closed her eyes for a moment.

CHAPTER VII.

When Sophia opened her eyes again, she felt Linden's gaze upon her and saw in the dark depths of his fine eyes that warm, gentle thing that had gone so straight to her heart and held it once before.

She made an impulsive movement toward him. Her slim white hands went out involuntarily through the cool dimness of the room. It seemed to her that her very heart was crying out in its loneliness and longing.

And then the sharp ringing of the telephone bell shrilled through the silence.

Sophia started. A mask of fear lay for a moment over her white, startled face. The thing was getting her nerves.

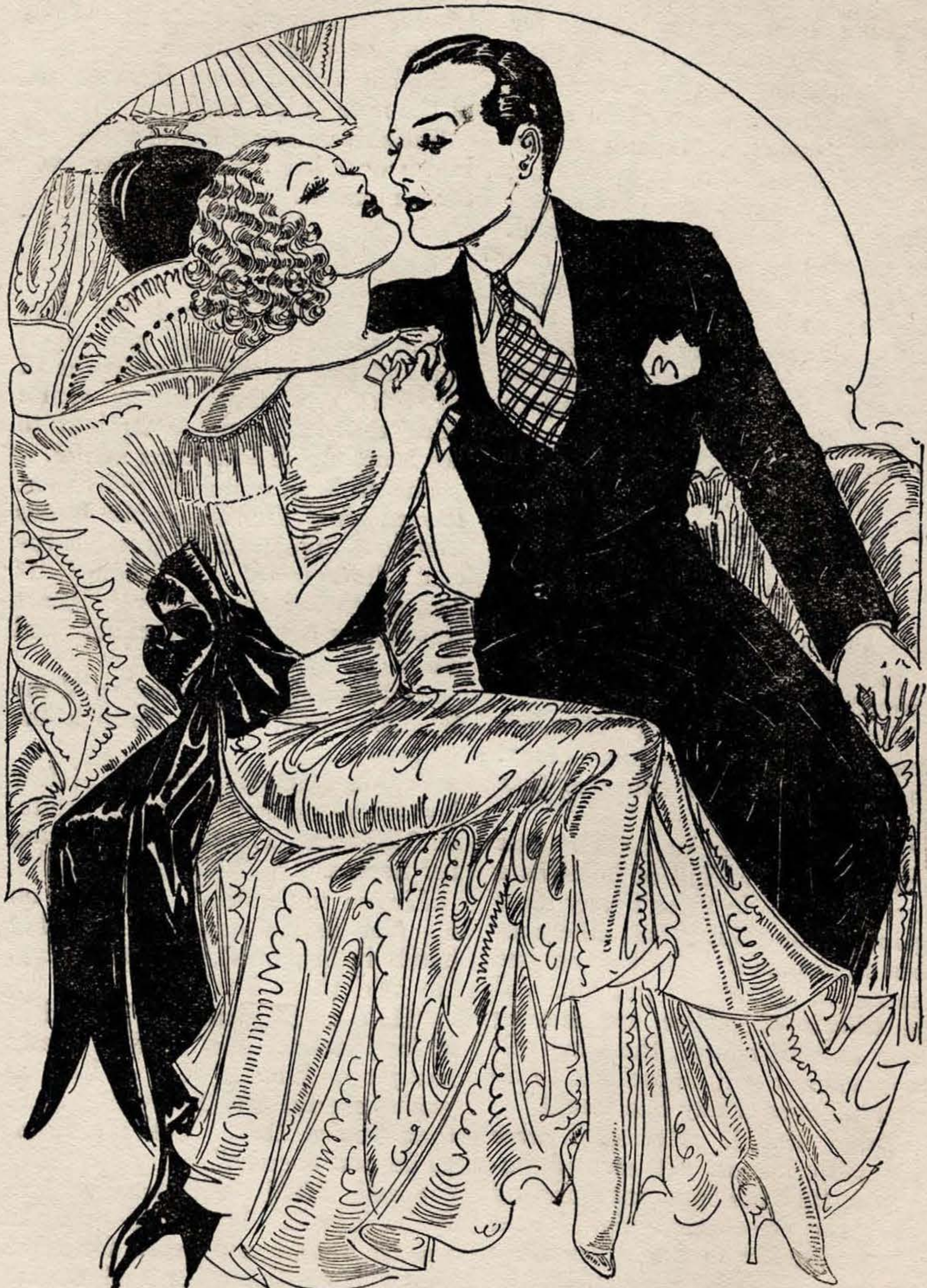
Linden understood. He was on his feet beside her. He had her hands in his, small, cold, fluttering. He held them firmly.

"Hold on to yourself," he said in a low, calm tone. "You really haven't a thing to fear as long as you're careful and I'm seeing to it that you're that. Let me listen while you answer."

Sophia lifted the instrument and spoke into it. It seemed that she waited a thousand years for some sound from the other end of the wire.

It came finally, low, guttural, horrible:

"Say, lady, if you like the place you're livin', better lay off the



Sophia shivered and closed her eyes. When she opened them again, she saw in the dark depths of Linden's eyes that warm, gentle thing that had gone straight to her heart and held it once before.

idea of spilling what you know about the fellow that's up for the Maddern killing." There was just a moment's silence. Then: "And we don't mean maybe!"

Before the man had finished

speaking Linden had rushed from the room to the operator out in the hall.

"Find out where Miss Ambler's call is coming from, please!" he ordered crisply.

The girl plugged in, investigated, and then turned to the waiting man.

"The party's hung up and there's no way of tracing him," she said politely.

Thursby Linden managed to thank her just as politely and then hurried back to Sophia to find her standing, white and frightened, the telephone still in her hand.

Linden took it from her and replaced it.

"That was close," he said. "I expected it, but it came even a little sooner than I thought. Some one followed your girl friend here and listened to your conversation. Do you think we'd better warn her?"

Sophia grinned cynically.

"She's safe. A forty mule team couldn't pull the facts from her. She's going to let things go just as they will."

"Then the less we say to her the better. She might even turn in with the other side."

"I suppose things like that do happen, though Rhoda's supposed to be good!" With a trace of sarcasm in the tone. Her courage was returning to her, flooding back and washing before it all the fear that had rioted her.

There was something to fight and she was ready for it!

Suddenly she seemed to gird herself for battle. She even stood and pulled the smart black sash a bit around her.

Linden grinned.

"You have the air of getting ready for battle!" he said.

"That's just what I'm doing! I suppose this is what that note meant. I'm the dame that was to keep her trap shut?"

"Yes, little and lovely. They dared refer to your exquisite mouth in that way!" he exclaimed, in tender humor.

"I'll make them pay!" In humor, but there was something grim about it. "I'm going to be one of those girls that makes them pay and pay and pay—if you know what I mean!"

There was frank admiration in Linden's eyes.

"You're made of swell stuff, Sophia," he said, his voice echoing the admiration of his eyes.

"And you're made of grand stuff!" She was standing, hands behind her, looking up at him. And then with a gay little laugh: "Aren't we the bouquet slingers though!"

"But with me, Sophia, I'm afraid it wasn't a bouquet." There was a rather tensely quiet note in his voice.

"You're not insinuating that my flowers were any less real than yours?"

"No, only that I don't deserve them so much. A brave woman is something, Sophia. A brave one who is at the same time generous and feminine and lovely."

"Should I take a bow?" she asked, laughing with sweet lightness.

"I think you should!"

And then for a moment they stood looking at each other again with that peculiar, warm, tense electric current passing between them. Sophia felt as if his arms were reaching out for her; she had the sensation of being held in them and yet they were standing apart, his arms down at his sides.

"But, after all, the joking's over" —her voice was quite serious— "threats or no threats, I'm not going to let Arnold Cranston pay the terrific price that he's apt to have to if some one doesn't interfere. I'm going to talk when the time comes, regardless!"

Thursby Linden's hand moved up in a staying gesture as if he would have stopped the words that some one listening in might hear. But it was too late. They had poured from Sophia's vivid lips with young and passionate earnestness.

"Sophia!" In low voiced protest.

She stopped then and looked around as if there might be some one in the room.

"What a rash child you are!"

And then once more they found themselves standing, staring at each other.

"Have you a date for to-night?" Linden asked finally and quite frankly.

Sophia grinned.

"No, tall and handsome," she said. "I told you I'd been stood up. I haven't any dates any more—I'm all out of them!"

"That boy will come running back as soon as he finds out how lucky he was when you looked at him! But that's neither here nor there! If you haven't a date, how about going out with me? I have an engagement with that blond queen who spit fire from the limousine the other night, but why not come along with us?"

Sophia stared at him for a moment.

"Do you realize what you're asking, Thursby Linden?" she questioned. "Do you know that you're just begging for trouble when you suggest such a thing to that girl?"

Linden laughed easily.

"You don't know her!" he said. "Lisbet likes meeting people better than anything she does. You know, she's one of those girls who's always studying types—oh, very seriously—because she's going to write a book some day! She'll be crazy to know you. You'll be something new to her! She's often asked me about the girls in the office."

"I know, but asking you about them, being mildly curious about what kind of fish, flesh or small fry they are, and going out in the same party with them are two quite different things, ole dear, if I may say so."

"You may say so, little and lovely," catching her mood, "but that doesn't mean that I believe it! I know Lisbet. She's got her funny little ways, but on the inside she's all right. I'm going to call her."

And before Sophia could say anything more he had the telephone in his hand and was giving an East Side number.

"Surely, sweet, I'd love to! I'd be thrilled! I think that's grand—perfectly grand!"

Linden had drawn Sophia into the circle of his arm and held the phone so that she could hear what Lisbet's high, sweet voice said.

"And so, you see," he said after hanging up, "that's that!"

He had just turned from the phone and they were standing very close. He looked down at her for a tense moment, gripped her shoulders and held her so for an instant. Then he pushed her from him.

"Run away before I kiss you!" he said, trying to speak lightly but not quite able to mask the emotional huskiness of his voice.

"Is it to be a very precious date to-night, or semiprecious?" she asked quickly, looking up at him quizzically and trying to hide the emotion that had surged through her own being in that close moment.

"I'd say precious"—he had gotten control of himself again—"but of course, you're talking about clothes as women always are, so let's say semiconscious and you stay just as you are. That dress is perfect. You're a dream in it."

"Thank you, kind sir!" Her elaborate curtsy in the dim light was an extravagantly lovely thing.

"And now come here, young lady, and let me very seriously tell you that aside from wanting very much to spend the evening basking in the cool light of your beautiful eyes, I haven't wanted you and your young rashness to be alone to-night!"

She stepped back in mock offense.

"Then it wasn't that you were pining for my society? Just as sort of protector—like a mustard plaster in cold weather or something?"

Linden laughed:

"Well, you could have picked out a little nicer simile. I don't know that I'm flattered! A mustard plaster!"

Sophia laughed lightly—a laugh that was like the chiming of a thousand silver bells at twilight, a laugh that was like a soft breeze blowing over a colorful garden at vespers.

"That makes it all right," said Linden. "Anything's all right that starts the music of your laugh. Have you ever listened to it yourself, little and lovely? It's the most beautiful thing."

"Some day when I'm very down and in need of flattering compliments, I'll laugh and listen to it and try to remember that lovely thing you've just said!"

"I could say so many things so much lovelier." There was a sudden earnestness about his voice that Sophia recognized and that all but stayed the mad beating of her heart. The room seemed suddenly to be filled with a tense undercurrent of emotion.

TO BE CONTINUED.

* * *

Beginning Next Week!

IN "Glittering Girl," May Christie's latest novel in serial form, Miss Christie pulls aside the curtain and reveals to her readers society as society *really* is. A débutante has her heartaches and troubles the same as any other girl. Her life is not a daily round of good-looking men, smart clothes, gay luncheon and dinner parties.

Read the first installment of this fascinating serial in next week's issue of this magazine and find out for yourself just what a deb's life is like, how society acts when it takes off its party dress.

Out Next Week!

Two In Love

By Dorothy Cox Hesse

LESS than half a dozen passengers occupied the 4:15 bus when Eloise got on just one minute before it left the city terminal for its night run to the sea.

This was the season of the year when the northern Pacific beaches were not so popular. Storms were frequent and fogs were of almost daily occurrence. But Eloise Merrill's heritage was of the sea. Her great-grandfather had been a sea captain, sailing to the Far East; her grandfather had owned a steamship line, and her father, Cecil Merrill, was a shipbuilding magnate, who had added to his riches another fortune by marrying Eloise's mother.

This evening Eloise was doing an unprecedented thing; on an irresistible impulse she had boarded a bus instead of driving her own fast roadster.

She had left a note for her mother telling her not to worry or to be annoyed. This once, she'd decided, before it might be too late, she would have a taste of unhampered, unheralded, unphotographed freedom. She craved a week-end trip like any other average young girl who wasn't flattered, deceived, publicized and sought after at every turn.

And the very good-looking young man seated directly across the aisle was not at all unaware of her amazing beauty. He could scarcely take his eyes off her. Yet, somehow, his frequent and admiring glances in her direction were not offensive. The first time his dark-gray eyes met Eloise's hazel, gold-flecked ones, she experienced a quick, delightful thrill. This in itself was unusual, for she was used to being stared at.

Eloise had everything that other girls long for; beauty, health, wealth and a high social position. But she wanted something more, and that particular something was the one thing which seemed hopelessly impossible to obtain. She longed to love and be loved romantically, ardently, for herself alone, stripped of the allure of great riches.

She looked out the window, but scarcely saw the darkening fields or the flaming foliage of autumn. She was lost in thought, wondering about the dark-haired young man dressed so becomingly in a brown tweed suit. Who was he, what was he, and why was he aboard this clattering bus bound for the practically deserted beaches? He had a metropolitan, successful air about him. She had glimpsed a leather brief case partly covered by his folded overcoat, which lay on the empty seat beside him. Probably an ambitious bond salesman, or a prominent young lawyer. She wanted terribly to know.

She couldn't resist a second glance, and was amazed to find her heart thumping faster when their eyes met. His eyes smiled a friendly greeting, and involuntarily, her warm, sweet mouth curved in a provocative smile; but she turned her head away quickly, and continued to stare blankly out the window.

Suddenly the bus left the State highway, and almost immediately, a strong wind came up. Eloise pulled her green béret with its cocky little feather more closely over her copper-colored hair, and reached for her green swagger coat.

Like a flash, the young man jumped up and held her coat for her. "May I please?" he begged. "Wouldn't you like some of the windows closed?"

"Yes, thank you," exclaimed Eloise eagerly. Then after the briefest of pauses: "You can tell immediately when you reach the coast highway. It always gets so windy." She smiled up at him and he smiled down at her, and at that very moment a lurch of the swaying bus landed the stranger directly into the vacant seat beside her.

"We'll soon be running into a fog," she ventured, and hoped that her voice did not betray her delight over the happy "accident."

"Going far?" His voice was deep and soft.

"To De Lake," she replied. "I've friends who always spend a month in the fall at their cottage there. They hate the summer crowds and like to watch the storms. And," she added, with an enchanting smile and a flash of her beautiful white teeth, "so do I. I love to see those tremendous waves dash so madly against the rocks and bombard the lonely beaches. It's savage and overwhelming, and it thrills me more than anything I know of."

"I know," he declared understandingly, "it gets me that way, too. Sort of fills one with strange, wild yearnings for one hardly knows what."

"We're pagans, I guess," laughed Eloise.

"Or romantics," he smiled down into her eyes.

For a few minutes there was silence. Then, "How far do you go?" she asked as nonchalantly as possible, while her heart pounded furiously as she waited for his reply. She didn't want him to leave, this gallant stranger who already seemed like an old friend. It seemed strange, but she needed him.

He was so real, so understanding, and he didn't know she was a poor little rich girl, running away. It was surely fate which had prompted her to hop onto a public bus for a long night ride alone. Maybe she was a romantic, but she was already practically certain that this clean-cut, good-looking, soft-spoken stranger was the one man she wanted. The mere thought that he might not reciprocate and fall in love with her almost sent her into a panic.

"I'm bound for Agate Beach," he told her. "My chief is staying at the inn under doctor's orders, to rest and play golf in the salt air. I'm taking down some blue prints for his approval."

"Your chief?" queried Eloise, experiencing a momentary sense of disappointment because he was not what she had thought.

"Yes," he explained, "he's the senior partner of West, Harris & West, architects. I'm secretary; chief secretary, I suppose you'd call it."

"Oh," replied Eloise. "I've heard of the firm. A very old, established company; sort of pioneers on the coast, aren't they, and literally rolling in wealth?"

Then, without waiting for his answer, she went on. "Too much money is an awful handicap, I think." Suddenly aware of the slip, she gave a gasp of dismay. This young secretary with the warm, pleasant smile and clear eyes must not suspect that she was one of those with too large a share of the world's riches. She wanted to win him without that ever-popular lure.

Resolutely, she turned her face to him. "I've had ample opportunity to learn something about rich people," she hastened to explain. "I'm traveling companion to a very wealthy, restless, and discontented woman. She and her husband married to combine two large fortunes and to please their parents. But I don't think mere liking is enough. Of course, she couldn't ever have been a romantic," she finished, smiling up at him roguishly.

"Like you," he smiled in return. And then: "But you're amazingly wise for a girl so young."

"Well," she continued with a little shrug, "I've been around a good deal. Traveling all over, one picks up a lot. I've made three trips to Europe, two to the Orient, one to Rio de Janiero, and two to Florida with my—my employer, and she's never satisfied. When she's here she wants to be there, and when she's there, she wants to be elsewhere."

"You think settling down would appeal to you, then?" he asked mischievously.

Eloise was thrillingly conscious of the ardent look in his eyes, the suppressed eagerness of his voice. He was undoubtedly falling in love with her. He must be! And it *was* fate that had brought them together. She shivered a little.

If she hadn't taken this shaky bus she'd never have known this delicious, achingly sweet feeling which was filling her being with a warm, happy glow. She longed to snuggle up close to him, to let her head drop on his shoulder, and ride on and on through the windy darkness with the fog sifting across her face, spraying it like a pin-point shower.

"You're cold!" he murmured solicitously. "I'll close those rear windows altogether."

When he resumed the seat beside her, they, as with one accord, sat huddled together. And the warmth and masculine strength of him so moved and thrilled Eloise that her lovely face flushed hotly. If her fastidious, conventional mother could see her now, she'd go into a heavy faint. But what, Eloise asked herself, did her mother know of the kind of love that flames up like a torch in the darkness, to warm the heart and carry one away with joy?

His arm, which lay across the back of the seat. slowly slid down to her shoulder; his hand pulled her fox fur more closely about her face, and remained there. Eloise did not resent it. On the contrary, she felt a delicious tingle racing through her.

The bus slowed down. Ahead of them lights blurred drunkenly in the thick fog. "Twenty minutes here for lunch," the driver announced.

They were the first to alight. Inside the little café it was cozy, warm and cheerful. They sat on stools before an immaculate lunch counter, and ate hot clam chowder, sandwiches and coffee.

"Delicious chowder!" exclaimed Eloise.

"The best I ever ate," he declared.

And Eloise, who had eaten the richest and most expensive foods in most of the famous hotels of Europe, wished with all her heart that she might go on by this young man's side forever, eating in homy little inns, enjoying simple pleasures. The yearning in her heart became an ache. A deep, urgent hunger to possess and be possessed.

"You haven't told me your name," he reflected suddenly, when they had drunk the last drop of steaming, fragrant coffee. "I'd like to know, because, you see, I can't let you go without some assurance that I can find you again. And soon!" he added fervently.

"But I'm sailing for Hawaii next week," replied Eloise regretfully, and intentionally neglecting to give a name. She would have to think up one, she told herself nervously. "My restless lady wants to drink in the sunshine and grow slim on a diet chiefly of pineapple," she laughed.

They were back in the bus again and moving slowly onward through a strange, eerie world, blanketed with ever-thickening fog, while well out from the shore line, the melancholy sound of a whistling-buoy gave almost continuous warning to ships of the nearness of dangerously concealed rocks.

"Another half hour and you'll be getting off," he announced ruefully, as if he, too, were affected by the peculiar loneliness of the dreary night. "Please trust me, and believe what I am going to tell you. I never dreamed I'd be lucky enough to meet a girl like you. There are things I want to say that I can't say here. Would you mind if I stopped off at De Lake to-night and came to see you at your friends' cottage in the morning?"

"I'd be glad to see you again in the morning," she answered, trying desperately to control the happy tremor in her voice. "If it isn't stormy we could have a round of golf, if you'd like. We can borrow my friends' clubs. There's a tricky little course near by."

"That would be wonderful!" he cried. "I'd better tell you my name now. It's Stephen McCready."

"And mine," fibbed Eloise, "is Louise Morgan."

Two hours behind schedule, they alighted stiffly from the bus. The sleepy night agent emerged from his tiny office and directed Stephen to the hotel. Then he picked up Eloise's bags and said he would take her down to the Hardings' cottage.

Grace and Jim Harding were popping corn over red-hot coals in the fireplace when she stumbled into the warm, bright living room.

"We'd given you up," Grace cried. "Did you have a breakdown or did the fog delay you?"

"It was the fog," Eloise explained after she was seated, shivering, before the fire, telling them about the trip. She omitted only the important detail that she was hopelessly in love with a sort of glorified chief clerk, whose name she had learned only fifteen minutes before.

This information she imparted to Grace later, when Grace was curled up in bed under a woolly comforter, while Eloise cold-creamed her face and unpacked.

"You're plain crazy!" Grace exclaimed. "You know you wouldn't dare marry him; you'd ruin both your lives. Your worlds are too far apart. You've just gone absurdly romantic. Next week, on the boat, you'll be having an exciting flirtation under a tropic moon and forget Stephen. To-night I think you've got a touch of fog on the brain."

Eloise gave her a disgusted look. "And the week after that," she stormed, "mother'll be trying to marry me off to that Count Belfern we met in Palm Beach last spring. He's meeting us in Honolulu. And I'll be causing mother headaches and no end of woe, because if ever I did have the idea that I might marry him, and pay his bills, and add new distinction to his ancestral castle, it's all off now. Since I've met Stephen and learned about real love, I wouldn't marry a prince with a throne in the immediate offing."

"You're being a little ridiculous, Elose. Besides, do you want to break your parents' hearts?"

"Their hearts won't break and you know it, Grace. Only their ego would be hurt if I marry, as they'd say, beneath me. They want me to make a brilliant match; to uphold the family name and all that. But I don't care a snap about such things, now. I want to exercise my right to choose my own future. Mother and dad had their choice. Now I'm going to make mine."

"But don't forget," Grace persisted, "that you've deliberately deceived Stephen. And another thing, he might not relish the idea of being just a rich girl's husband."

"That's what's bothering me most, right now," Eloise admitted. "However, dad may disinherit me."

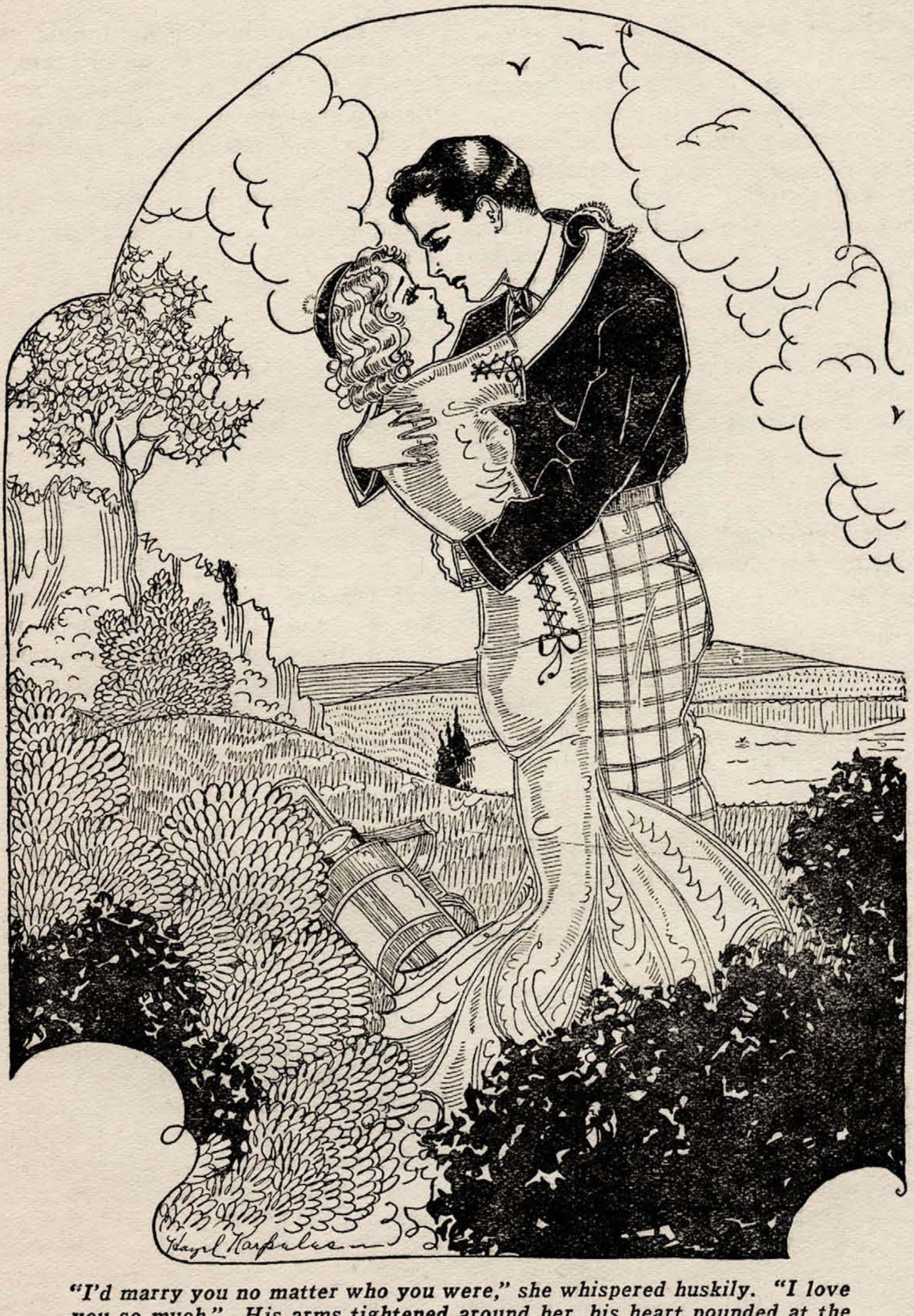
"I doubt it," Grace said decisively. "He may threaten to do so and stage a few wild gestures, and then relent. But even so, there's the cool million or so your grandmother left you outright. What would you do about that?"

"Heavens!" cried Eloise in dismay. "Honestly, Grace, I forgot all about that! Suppose it would be a stumbling block. Still, we could put it in trust or whatever it is people do for their children, or keep it for our old age. Or, if Stephen is hopelessly proud and set, we could give it to some charity or whatever Stephen advises for getting rid of it."

Grace sniffed and shook her head dismally. "You *are* sunk. If you actually think you could live on a clerk's earnings, I give up. It's no use arguing. But don't tell me a year or two from now that I didn't warn you," she advised solemnly.

"Then you and Jim won't give me away, but you'll let me tell him after he—after he tells me what I think he's going to," exclaimed Eloise a bit incoherently and with slightly less assurance.

What if he really wasn't as serious as she'd thought? Or suppose he saw everything differently in the morning. She felt a little panicky.



"I'd marry you no matter who you were," she whispered huskily. "I love you so much." His arms tightened around her, his heart pounded at the thought of her great love for him.

It would be more than she could bear to lose him, now.

"Count on us, of course," said Grace encouragingly. "And ask him here for lunch if you're still on speaking terms after the golf or love game.

And now good night, and for pity's sake don't lie awake losing your beauty sleep, thinking about how to live on fifty dollars a week."

But Eloise did lie awake. Hours and hours, and decided if worst came to worst, and he would not accept her money, she would indeed have to learn to figure costs and make budgets. The prospect didn't please her, but she wanted Stephen so badly. Mentally, she tried to budget forty-five or fifty dollars a week to pay rent, food and clothing bills. But it wouldn't come out anywhere near right. Then she'd go over it all again, but forget half of the items, until the whole business was dismally, depressingly discouraging. Exhausted, finally, she went to sleep.

The next morning was clear. The sun came out and the sea was a deep, bright blue. A good omen, Eloise thought, as she dressed in her most becoming soft wool dress, a golden-yellow and chestnut-brown combination which did bewitching things to her almost amber-colored eyes and shining bronze hair.

Stephen came just after they had finished breakfast, and almost immediately they departed for the golf links. They played two holes, and then sat down on a bench in the warm sunshine.

"I couldn't sleep," he began, "for thinking of you. It's terribly soon to be saying it, but I love you, Louise. The minute I saw you something wonderful happened that had never happened to me before, nor ever will again. It isn't given to a man to love twice this way. I can't give you up," he cried passionately. "If there's any hope at all for me, please tell me at once, for I can't stand this uncertainty another minute."

He had firm hold of her hands, as if he were afraid to let go of them.

"I loved you from the very moment you stepped into that rickety old bus, and somehow, I felt that you returned my love. Tell me quickly, darling, was I right?" He gazed at her, an excited glitter in his eyes.

"Yes, Stephen," she murmured in a soft, tremulous voice, "I love you, too."

"You darling!" he cried. Then, after a hasty glance about the course, he snatched her into his arms and kissed her lips, her eyes, her glorious hair. "I haven't much to offer a girl who's had the world for a playground," he whispered against her soft cheek, "but if you'll take the big chance with me, some day, I'm sure, I'll stand at the head of something, instead of at the bottom. Are you willing to give up your position, my sweet, and stay and marry me?"

And now, suddenly Eloise was fearful. Truly afraid to tell him of her deception and of her immense wealth. He was, just as she had suspected, the kind that wanted to win his own place. There had been pride and ambition in his voice when he said, "Some day I'll stand at the head of something."

She turned her face away. She didn't want to see his eyes condemn her. "Yes, I'll stay and marry you Stephen," she whispered softly. "But wait, wait!" she cried wildly, as he was about to take her in his arms again. "I've a confession to make. I'm not a paid companion; I'm that unhappy rich woman's daughter. I'm terribly, disgracefully wealthy, Stephen. I'm Eloise Merrill. I hated it, deceiving you, but you do understand, don't you?" she pleaded, lifting her beautiful, beseeching face to his. "It was the only way I could make sure of being loved just for myself."

Very tenderly, he gathered her close. "You'd marry a nobody, a comparatively poor man, Eloise?" His voice shook with emotion.

"I'd marry you no matter who you were," she whispered huskily. "I love you so much."

His arms tightened almost fiercely, but still she felt there was something troubling him. A look of indecision flickered across his face.

"What is it?" she demanded fearfully.

"I was just thinking, people say very uncomplimentary things about a poor young man who marries a very rich girl."

"I knew it!" she cried, pulling away from him and looking straight into his eyes. "At least I was afraid you'd feel that way. So I thought it all out before I went to sleep last night, and I'm willing to give up all my money and live on whatever you make. With your love and help I can learn, Stephen. Father can cut me off, except for a small dowry, and I'll give the fortune my grandmother left me to some worthy charity."

Stephen held her off and looked at her, his heart pounding at the thought of her great love for him, until a suspicion of tears dimmed his eyes, and he swallowed painfully. "I don't deserve you," he said very solemnly, "but all the rest of my life, sweetheart, I shall try to make up to you for that brave little speech." He kissed her again, and then continued:

"I'm ashamed, too, for putting you to such a test. But you see, precious, it's been almost an obsession with me to find a girl who would love just me. I understand all too well what you have had to contend with. It's been practically the same with me. So when I knew I was falling in love with you last night, I deliberately deceived you, same as you did me.

"I'm Stephen McCready West, junior partner of West, Harris & West, and some day I'll be the head of the firm. I had a little smash-up with my car yesterday afternoon; that's how I happened to be aboard that blessed bus."

Eloise went suddenly limp in his arms. This was almost too much. It sounded like a fairy tale; such things didn't really happen.

Here she was, ready to give up her wealth and social position for the man she loved, only to discover that he was offering her the very same things. Surely she'd wake up to find it all a dream.

But Stephen was talking. "Shall you mind so very much being simply scandalously rich, my darling, because"—and his face broke irresistibly into a broad grin—"my mother, who owned a large number of gilt-edged bonds, left them all to me when she died."

Eloise's cheeks were glowing again, her eyes were dancing jewels. "I shan't mind at all," she exulted, "since we found love first."

"Is next week too soon for the wedding, my precious?" asked Stephen eagerly.

"Not for rich romantics like us," laughed Elose happily, and looked straight up into his smoldering eyes.

He drew her thrillingly close, kissed her hair, her eyes, and finally clung to her warm, eager lips. She returned kiss for kiss, happy in the knowledge that real love was theirs.

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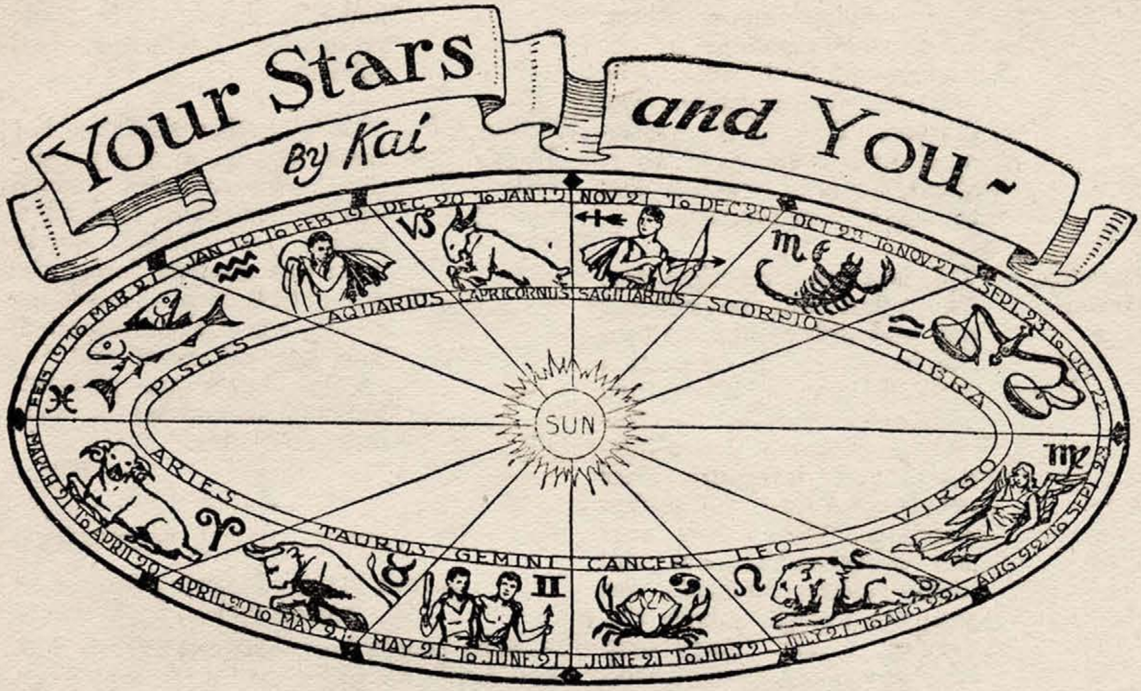
By Kai


JAN 19 To FEB 19
DEC 20 To JAN 19
NOV 21 To DEC 20
OCT 23 To NOV 21
SEPT 23 To OCT 22
AUG 22 To SEPT 23
JULY 21 To AUG 22
JUNE 21 To JULY 21
MAY 21 To JUNE 21
APRIL 20 To MAY 21
MARCH 21 To APRIL 20
FEB 19 To MAR 21
AQUARIUS
CAPRICORNUS
SAGITTARIUS
SCORPIO
LIBRA
VIRGO
LEO
CANCER
GEMINI
TAURUS
ARIES
PISCES
SUN

YOUR WEEK

This is a forceful week. There will be changes, restlessness, and strong emotional reactions. Carry on with your work and pay strict attention to your job, not forgetting to consider new ideas and new methods of procedure. Be careful in handling money. Take care of that which you possess and be careful of swindling and robbery. The planets carry an undercurrent of sobriety, practicality, and seriousness, which can be made very helpful if used constructively. Do not be bitter or morbid. Utilize these serious moments for considering all things carefully and logically. Eliminate those factors which are impeding your progress. Do not expect too much from your emotional relations with others. Be kind, tolerant, and understanding. Make the seven-day period efficient and productive. Allow no day to pass you by without having accomplished something, no matter how small or petty you may consider it.

DAY BY DAY

Hours mentioned are Eastern standard time

Saturday, March 10th ♄

This is a mixed day. Some parts of it will be pleasant and harmonious; others will be unusually active; others will be emotional and upsetting. The morning hours will be exciting, unsettled, stimulating mentally, and there will be a tendency to act rashly. This is a good morning and favorable afternoon for using original ideas that are practical, and for relations with those in superior positions. The evening hours will be steady, conservative, and quiet. Do not depend too much upon your social expectations this evening. Hilarity and excessive festivity are not the order of the evening

Sunday, March 11th ☉

The morning hours will be active, the afternoon hours slightly dull and dependent upon routine; the evening hours interesting and suitable for lively conversation. Just an average day, but not entirely unfavorable. There will be many features of the various periods which will be harmonious and decidedly pleasant.

Monday, March 12th ☽

Until 8:30 a. m. this morning there will be pleasant reactions and domestic harmony, if you do not try to force issues. Keep the deeper emotions in the background. The day as a whole will bring delays, disappointments, and emotional upheaval. Do not be morbid. Do not try to force your opinions upon others. Keep your emotions in the background and work. Be practical, conservative, and diligent. This is a good afternoon and evening to think about financial matters and the use of your funds.

Tuesday, March 13th ♂ This is a good, practical day. The mind will be efficient and you will be able to face the bare facts in connection with all things. The daytime hours should be used for commercial efforts; make adjustments and deal with older people. Adjust misunderstandings. The evening hours will bring recreational and pleasurable developments. Use your mind constructively this evening. Talk things over with any one associated with your life. Write, attend to correspondence, make plans, and establish better relations with those in whom you are interested.

Wednesday, March 14th ☿ The early-morning hours are uncertain and the influences will produce nervousness and an uncertain attitude until after 8:00 a. m. The later morning hours are pleasant and harmonious. The afternoon hours are favorable for dealing with other people; for contacts and interviews, creative work, and inspirational activities. The evening period is balanced, active, exciting, and favorable for any plans you may have made previously.

Thursday, March 15th ♃ There is a New Moon today at 7:09 a. m. The morning hours are very active and favorable for getting things done. The afternoon hours are exciting and there will be excessive activity, the liability to quarrels and injury from sharp instruments until 7:15 p. m. The evening hours are stimulating mentally, but there is an undercurrent of quietness and seriousness. The evening hours, however, can be made productive, interesting, and efficient.

Friday, March 16th ♀ This is another vital day, but there will be a strong emotional undercurrent which will be unpleasant to endure. Events will follow closely upon one another during the day until 4:00 p. m., carrying an element of the unexpected. The late afternoon and the evening hours are pleasant, harmonious, and can be made most enjoyable.

* * *

IF YOU WERE BORN BETWEEN

March 21st and April 20th

(Aries ♈)

—Aries people born between March 25th and April 2nd may expect a pleasant week, except for a slight nervousness which will react upon the digestive organs. Your judgment is good at this time if you will be conservative and be cautious in money affairs. If born between April 7th and 16th, you should use cold logic in settling your affairs. Keep your temper and poise. Do not be impulsive; go easy.

April 20th and May 21st

(Taurus ♉)

—Taureans born between April 24th and May 1st must be careful in their emotional affairs. Use your head and do not live excessively. Avoid serious relations with the opposite sex. Rely upon your intuition and develop your spiritual understanding. If engaged in literary work, this is a favorable and productive week. If born between May 4th and 13th, expect to live quietly and in a restricted groove. Take your pleasures lightly. Watch your temper and equilibrium. Accept changes philosophically and do not try to move too rapidly. A time for restraint.

May 21st and June 21st

(Gemini ♊)

—Geminians born between May 23rd and June 2nd will have an irritating week and it will require stern control to keep your nerves steady. There will be mental confusion and your decisions must be made carefully. Affairs in the home will be annoying to you. Inspect all contracts carefully before affixing your signature. Seek advice from other sources. Be cautious in your speech, especially with those in superior positions. Socially and emotionally, the week will be a pleasant one. Work diligently and constantly. If born between June 7th and 16th, you will find the week upsetting and annoying. But you will see opportunities and be able to act efficiently. Do not scatter your forces. Think sanely and do not be impulsive. Sift your values.

June 21st and July 21st

(Cancer ♋)

—Cancerians born between June 24th and July 2nd will find their minds responding efficiently this week. Inspirational and creative thinking will bring results. Socially, the week will not live up to expectations, but you should be thinking of important things and should capitalize upon your commercial talents at this time. If born between July 6th and 14th, there will be changes and irritations and some annoyance with various factors of your existence. Do not allow your feelings to rule you. Keep on the job and convert your energy into constructive effort.

July 21st and August 22nd

(Leo ♌)

—Leo people born between July 24th and August 1st must be careful in their relations with their fellow men this week, particularly with the opposite sex. Financial conditions related to partners will be a source of worry. Postpone important decisions this week, if possible. If born between August 6th and 14th, you will be restless and desire change, but this is not the proper time to make vital adjustments. Do not argue with any one about anything. Try to be patient with restrictions.

August 22nd and September 23rd

(Virgo ♍)

—Virgo people born between August 25th and September 3rd will find the trend of their life this week extremely annoying. You will have to be very cautious with the written and spoken word. Do not allow your imagination to run riot and erect fears about nonexisting conditions. Determine to be calm, logical, and balanced. If born between September 8th and 17th, you should not be too critical at this time. You will have an unusual amount of energy and you are likely to be too impulsive. Make adjustments and changes which are necessary for improving your welfare, but determine to live quietly, harmoniously, and efficiently. Do not forget the necessity of duty, regardless of your personal feelings.

September 23rd and October 22nd

(Libra ♎)

—Librans born between September 25th and October 3rd will have a fairly pleasant week, socially and personally, but unless you make a strenuous effort, the results you desire will not be forthcoming. Rely upon your intuition and inspiration. If born between October 6th and 14th, you may expect radical changes. Live quietly and accept the readjustments gracefully. You will have to sift your values and accept a new attitude upon life. Petty things will annoy you this week, but keep plugging, if you expect to further your interests. All Librans will have to forgo personal pleasure at this time in order to execute their jobs well.

October 22nd and November 21st

(Scorpio ♏)

—Scorpio people born between October 25th and November 2nd will find their minds very alert and efficient this week. Solve problems related to children and those in your charge. Avoid the opposite sex as much as possible. Live quietly and seriously. Stay on the job. Protect your health. If born between November 8th and 16th, you will find it difficult to follow routine and will wish to sacrifice commercial interests to your desires and impulses—a course most inadvisable. This is a vital week. Keep your temper. Do not be sarcastic. Be constructive.

November 21st and December 20th

(Sagittarius ♐)

—Sagittarians born between November 24th and December 2nd will find the week irritating and petty matters annoying. Be careful of the written and spoken word. Take your pleasures seriously and enjoy yourself, but be sure that you watch your health and obtain enough rest. Relaxation is good for you at this time, but you will have to work hard and live moderately if you wish to further your interests. If born between December 7th and 14th, this is a restless period, but your basic influences are excellent and you must stay on the job if you wish to accomplish anything at all. You will have much energy at this time; conserve some of it.

December 20th and January 19th

(Capricorn ♑)

—Capricornians born between December 24th and January 2nd will find their minds responding efficiently this week. It is a productive week for those engaged in creative work, especially of a mental nature. You should enjoy a very pleasant seven days. Make important decisions this week. If born between January 7th and 16th, be very careful with your dealings commercially and with those in higher positions. This is an energetic week. Keep your viewpoint balanced and do not allow your temper to get beyond control. Be patient if you have slow results. Be most cautious in handling property and real estate. Do nothing impulsively.

January 19th and February 19th
(Aquarius ♒)

—Aquarians born between January 24th and February 1st will have a pleasant week in many respects. Keep plodding along and attend to all duties, no matter how irksome they are. Your mental processes should be working efficiently at this time, so see that you use your head intelligently and often. If born between February 5th and 15th, you are operating with favorable influences, but you will have to stay on the job every minute if you wish to get results. Make necessary changes. This is a very energetic week for you. Use your energy constructively.

February 19th and March 21st
(Pisces ♓)

—Pisceans born between February 25th and March 2nd should have a pleasant, active week. There will be an element of confusion, of course, but you can control your negative viewpoint and adjust some of the uncertain factors if you will think clearly and logically. If born between March 7th and 16th, you will be upset this week and should be cautious about everything, especially the liability of minor accidents. Be careful in handling sharp instruments. This is a time for you to stay in a groove, to some extent; otherwise you will suffer financially.

TAURUS HUSBAND

The Taurus husband is an autocratic individual. He is practical, loves his home, and insists upon order and system. He is intense, jealous, strongly physical, and not interested in persons on the outside when they interfere with his schedule and existence. He loves beauty, color, and the romantic side of life; becoming very temperamental when routine is disrupted. The Taurus man is emotional and fixed in his opinions. If you wish to have harmony with this life partner, be tolerant of his ideas and do not openly oppose him. He needs to be prodded gently and subtly, but his stubbornness is notorious and dictation is something for which he will not stand in the least degree. Never play practical jokes on him; his sense of humor does not extend that far.

Taurus men have moments of morbid resentment toward life and toward persons associated with them. They are very sensitive and are likely to brood over matters for a long time before doing anything about them. Facts and reality are the keynotes of the male Taurean's existence. He likes to sift everything to its actual source, and if you think you are fooling this man over a long period of time, you have another thought coming. It is rare to see these husbands swerving from their ideals, principles and beliefs. They believe in constancy and have such an intense pride in possessiveness and authority, it is unusual to see them in the divorce courts. But, remember, when they are through with anything, all the king's horses and all the king's men are powerless to influence them to change. The sanctity of the domestic situation is not to be tampered with, in the eyes of the Taurus husband. Do not attempt to blast these men from their chosen path of living. That is extremely important. Allow him to go his leisurely way. If he can control his temper and live with a goal in sight, success is his eventually, and you can depend upon his reliability.

THE STAR QUESTION BOX

Mr. G. M. Q., born September 15, 1901, Ireland, hour not stated: This is more of an acknowledgment of your letter than anything else, Mr. Q. It was impossible for me to communicate with you directly, and my copy was written long ago for that period when you desired to receive your answer through the magazine. You were not very definite about your trip, but I assume it was a journey connected with business. Your influences this year are favorable, if you will coördinate your efforts with past endeavor and contacts, and continue to pursue a program which I hope you made long ago. As far as I can observe from the general positions in your chart, the results of the year are solely dependent upon your hard work and your ability to see and take advantage of opportunities. If you care to write me again, I will be very glad to hear from you.

M. C., born January 1, 1909, Texas, 1:00 a. m.: I think you will make a success of secretarial work. You have an evenly balanced disposition and you are shrewd. Your mind will develop excellently as you become older. As long as you are engaged in study at this time, do not give it up, but in the future, if you have an opportunity to study designing, commercial art, or something of that nature, it would be advisable. You have a fairly good year in 1934, in some respects, but you will have restrictions which will be irksome. Do not try to move too fast. Try to seek part-time work. You will be able to do your work efficiently.

Mrs. L. M. A., husband born May 13, 1901: Please write me again more in detail. It would be better for you to tell me the nature of your husband's illness and the hour and place of birth of him and of yourself. Of course, I do not answer medical questions, but am able to show periods of improvement and a better mental attitude, if I have sufficient birth data on which to make a judgment. Your husband's chart shows restricted health conditions in 1934, but I hesitate to express my opinion about his physical welfare because of lack of the information stated above. We published an article about the sign Taurus, under which your husband was born in the issue of November 4, 1933. If you will send us fifteen cents, we will be glad to send you a copy of the issue.

Miss V. R., born October 21, 1908, Florida, 1:00 a. m.: I do not know whether or not you have met the man you will marry, but you certainly will be in the mood for marriage beginning in November, 1934, and during the following winter you will receive a proposal, which will probably result in marriage in the late spring or early summer of 1935. You see, astrology indicates the impulses, urges and opportunities, but you are a free agent and being a human being you have the power to make your own decisions. Of course,

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when you contemplate a marital partnership or a business partnership with any one, the two charts affect each other. That is why it is necessary to have the chart of both persons concerned when a question on this subject is asked.

Mrs. E. M., born January 1, 1914, New York, 12:30 a. m.: Chicago would be a more pleasant and better place for you, but New York is better for your husband. So, what shall I say to you? The influences in your husband's chart are not favorable for a change in residence until the fall months of 1934. The year 1935 is good for both of you and there will be some phases of your life this year which will be pleasant and acceptable, too. But next year is the better period for both of you in every way. Your husband will be very restless this summer and there is a journey shown for both of you, so I suggest that we compromise. Take the trip to Chicago when it is convenient to do so, look over the situation, then make your decision. In my opinion, it would be very inadvisable for you to make a big jump, not knowing the conditions ahead. If your husband is employed now, I certainly do not advise you to make this important move before the spring months.

Miss W. G., born February 9, 1915, time and place not stated: As nearly as I can judge without your complete birth data, your chart does not blend well with that of the young man. You will meet some one else whom you will like much better during the year, and you will have the opportunity to marry in the early fall months. Your influences generally for the year are better for business, however, and you should try to advance yourself in your work or seek a better position in the spring.

Edward, born September 23, 1908, New York, 8:45 a. m.: It does not seem to me that you are suited for your present position. I advise you to seek creative work of some nature, such as illustrating or landscaping or even floral work. Also, you would do well in merchandising, especially in relation to wearing apparel. Department-store work should be very satisfactory to you because you have many interests and this would give you several outlets. You have a good chart, but you should never postpone anything. Often, you will lose chances because of this tendency to procrastinate. You were born under the sign Libra. We have to list the signs in the "Born Between—" in the manner we do, because of the flexibility of the time the sun enters each sign each year. Thank you for your letter. If I can do anything further for you, let me know.

Miss E. P., born July 8, 1912, place not stated, 1:00 a. m.: I really think you are going through a transitional stage here and that your affections are tied up in such a way that you would regret marriage if it is executed in the near future. I am very sincere when I say that a marriage from your personal standpoint should not transpire until the summer months of 1935. On the other hand, in many respects—the majority, I should say—your chart blends exceedingly well with that of the Pisces man—February 24th. It is quite possible for me to see why this great attraction exists and why you love him so much. But you are a sensible person and I feel you know this young man will not live up to your expectations entirely. You are very ambitious, and from what I am able to observe about the young man—without his hour of birth—it is my opinion that your outlook upon life differs and complete harmony from an economic standpoint does not exist. I am here to help you and it is against my ethics for me to say definitely that you should marry this man. I advise against it and suggest that you hold your decision for a time. Think it over. If I can help you further, let me know.

A. R. A., born December 22, 1916: Will you please write again and send me your complete birth data. Also, the full data of the young man in question. I am unable to answer your specific question about marriage unless I have complete data.

Mrs. B., born April 5, 1868, Maryland, 5:00 p. m.: Thank you so much for your kind letter. As you know, it is always pleasing to know that your work is enjoyed and appreciated, and a warm glow came around my heart when you wrote that you traveled so far each week to buy the magazine. About your property: It would not be advisable for you to force the sale on your house at this time. As a matter of fact, it would be better for you to wait for about another sixteen months. I know you dislike hearing this, but your influences at this time are not as favorable for the sale as they will be later. Of course, you can sell at sacrifice, but I would hate to see you do that. Perhaps you can make an arrangement for companionship which will keep you from being so lonely. I see your point of view and appreciate your feelings, but in this case, patience will bring reward. You are an Aries person and patience is not one of your strongest attributes, but, I am sure, you have lived this life rather completely and realize that we cannot have everything we wish at the time we want it. Will be glad to hear from you any time you care to write to me.

M. E. B., born October 19, 1888, New York, 2:30 p. m.: At the time you wrote me you were upset mentally and were inclined to place a morbid construction upon everything, and I feel sure you have gotten hold of yourself somewhat by this time and will have overcome some of your panic. You have an excellent chart at birth, comparatively speaking, and eventually you will find much contentment and stability of a permanent nature. You must not allow any individual factor to color your entire viewpoint or your mode of existence, because you are a person who will have many things happen throughout a lifetime. Charge all these things to experience and incorporate them constructively into your single pattern of life. When this association of seven years ended recently, it was the termination of a definite cycle in your existence and now you must go on to other fields, which will bring you experiences—some pleasant, and others annoying. The year 1934 will bring marked changes in your environment, in connection with your associates in your social and business life. Nothing is hopeless. The workers of the world must carry on to bigger things and higher developments. If certain conditions exist too long we begin to stagnate and fail to turn with the wheels of progress, and in a person of your temperament, the failure to make advancement every day of your life is detrimental to your viewpoint. You have been in a rut, to some extent, during recent years, and that is why this sudden shifting of the scenes has disturbed you. It is that way with most of us. One of the most important years of your life is 1934. There will be readjustments and many changes, mentally, physically, and spiritually. Two specific times of mental and actual upheaval are in February and November. Your influences for the year are uncomfortable in some respects and bring mental strain. On the other hand, if you will take each occurrence as it arises, handle it in your usual efficient manner, charge it to progress, and go on to new things, you will save yourself heartache and mental security. Some of your planetary conditions this year are very promising. You will have the assistance of the planets in meeting these crises, and your salvation will be in keeping philosophical and balanced. There is an element in your chart which brings you protection, and if you will only have confidence in yourself and your future, no matter what the personal adjustments are, you will preserve your excellent faculties for bigger and better things. I am not trying merely to soften my words by offering you encouragement. It will be a hard year to live, but there are mitigating influences which will be helpful and which will bring you much pleasure. The summer period is less strained than the other months, and by the time the end of November arrives, you will know definitely just why everything that will have happened has occurred. Above all things, avoid a feeling of panic. That will do no good and you can handle your affairs much better if you keep a clear head. I am sorry not to have been able to answer you sooner, but it was impossible. The future is much brighter for you. Keep that conviction uppermost in your mind. My best wishes go forward and my offer of further coöperation, whenever needed.

WHY QUESTIONS ARE NOT ANSWERED

Kai does not send answers by mail.

Mrs. C. C. P., April 9, 1882: When was your husband born? What change do you intend making?

W. J. G., October 6, 1890: I cannot help you without more information about yourself. What kind of work do you do? What sort of education have you?

Mr. A. E. F., September 18, 1910: I cannot tell you about the young lady until I have her birth data, including the hour of birth.

Editor's Note: Questions for this department are answered only through Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine. Each reader is allowed to ask one question. Be sure to give the following data in your letter: date, month, year, and place of birth, the hour of the day or night, if possible, and sex. Address your letters to KAI, care of this magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

The Friendliest Corner

By MARY MORRIS

* * *

Miss Morris will help you to make friends

Miss Mary Morris, who conducts this department, will see to it that you will be able to make friends with other readers, though thousands of miles may separate you. It must be understood that Miss Morris will undertake to exchange letters only between men and men, boys and boys, women and women, girls and girls. All reasonable care will be exercised in the introduction of correspondents. If any unsatisfactory letters are received by our readers, the publishers would appreciate their being sent to them. Please sign your name and address when writing. Be sure to inclose forwarding postage when sending letters through The Friendliest Corner, so that mail can be forwarded.

Address Miss Mary Morris, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

DOES the intangible glamour of footlights interest you? Then let Dancing Doll tell you about the many years she has spent on the stage. Her life is a series of colorful experiences; she has traveled in big and small towns, and stage life in Hollywood and Los Angeles is no novelty to her. Like all show people, she has a warm heart and extends the glad hand of friendship to those who want it. Girls, make friends with this little dancer!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl of twenty-three, have blond hair, blue eyes, and a happy-go-lucky disposition. I am a dancer, and have been on the stage for eight years, although I'm not dancing at present. I can tell you many interesting facts about the theater world, girls. I have traveled a good deal, have danced in big and small towns, and know the show folks. You'll find me a true friend, Pals. I'll be glad to exchange snapshots, and will tell you all about myself. I'll more than appreciate your letters. DANCING DOLL.

An Irish girl in Singapore!

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a seventeen-year-old Irish girl living in the Far East. I'm greatly interested in outdoor sports, singing, dancing, have an affectionate and sunny disposition, but I'm very lonely because I haven't many friends. Won't some of you Pals write to me? I'll exchange snapshots, picture post cards of China, stamps, labels, and anything else girls are interested in.

SINGAPORE ELLA.

Oklahoma Ben likes sports.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: You may not believe it, but I'm really a very lonely young man of twenty-five. I am very fond of all sports, especially swimming, racing, dancing, and wrestling. I would enjoy hearing from college boys and any one else who would care to write to

OKLAHOMA BEN.

Does farming interest you?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm sure many Pals will admit that although farming is interesting, there are many dull moments, too. I'm a young married woman who'd like to hear from girls and married women of all ages. Though my days are busy—we raise poultry in addition to working the farm—the evenings are often long and lonely. My pet hobby is collecting picture post cards. May I expect a shower of letters? FARMERETTE CLAIR.

He'll be a hearty friend.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a nineteen-year-old college boy pleading for Pen Pals. I'm studying to be a chemical engineer, care for everything and every one except girls, and as business is quite dull in my town, I would more than appreciate hearing from those who want a sincere Pal. Make the old postman blow his whistle and bring in the letters! ROBERT T.

She likes New York best.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Here's a lonesome young girl who wants her share of Pals. I have recently moved to Washington, D. C., and find it hard to get acquainted. I love excitement, have traveled a lot, but I like New York best. I've no particular hobbies, but enjoy the movies, reading, and almost everything else. All you girls who want a truly understanding Pal, write to me. Your age doesn't matter. I promise to answer all letters.

SUNNY PAULA.

Three hearts with a single thought.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room in your Corner for three brunet Virginia girls? We are not exactly lonely, but we'd love to have some Pen Pals. We want to hear from girls living in the West, but girls from all over the world are certainly welcome. We are three happy friends who believe in having good times. So come on, girls, send some of your letters our way. We'll be very glad to exchange snapshots. LUCKY DUCKY THREE.

She'll tell about far-off Africa.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would like to join your Friendliest Corner and receive letters from girls in the United States and elsewhere. I am the only girl in our family, have dark-brown hair and eyes, like swimming and hockey, attend private dances, and am interested in everything. I'm only sixteen, but I am quite serious-minded. I'm learning millinery, and intend to go into that business. Please, girls, write soon. I'll be glad to tell you anything you want to know about myself and Africa. EILEEN OF DURBAN.

She's full of mischief.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a Canadian girl of eighteen. Because of poor health, I can't work, and therefore I must stay home most of the time. I have loads of time to write letters, and as I haven't very many friends, it would be great to hear from Pals everywhere. Though I don't get around much, I'm peppy and full of mischief, and try never to feel sorry for myself. Girls, all letters will get a prompt answer. MISCHIEVOUS TOOTS.

Angie's bashful, but longs for Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a brown-eyed girl of twenty-six. I'm very bashful and shy, but once I get acquainted, I have much to talk about. I'm not working at present, and time drags heavily. I've lots of time to write letters. I'd be delighted to see my mail box filled with letters from Pals all over the world. So hurry, and give a lonely girl a break! ANGIE.

You'll like Madalyn and Irvin.

DEAR MISS MORRISS We are brother and sister. Madalyn is fourteen, and Irvin is seventeen. We'd like to hear from young girls and boys living in the South, as we expect to visit there this summer. We've had quite a lot of adventures and want to swap yarns. We are interested in every one and everything, and are sure that Pals who write to us won't be disappointed. Who'll be the first?

MADALYN AND IRVIN.

All sorts of girls interest her.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Although I am not employed at present, I am keeping cheerful and hope that better luck will come my way soon. I know that it would help a lot if some of the girls would write to me. I want to hear from girls everywhere and in different professions, if any. Age is of no consequence. I live near New York, and can tell you about the big city. Come on, Pals, keep my mail box filled.

PAL EDNA.

Boys, send your cheer to Some Fun Kid.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Is there any one who would care to write to a sick young boy who has been in the hospital for almost two years? It would make me so happy to have some Pals to write to, and I know that receiving letters would please me more than anything else I can think of. I have brown hair, blue eyes, a happy disposition, and make friends easily. Boys, send your letters my way, won't you?

SOME FUN KID.

Big Sister hopes she merits Pals.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Have you room for another girl who wants Pals to write to? I'm twenty years old, have traveled a little in the United States, can speak French, and am very fond of all sports. I hope some of you girls will find my plea interesting enough to answer it. I will answer all letters.

BIG SISTER.

Winsome Helen wants a large Pal list.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl of nineteen, and very lonely. I live in a silk-mill town, and haven't many friends. I'm good-natured and friendly, and want to hear from all you girls between nineteen and twenty-two. I will exchange snapshots with every one who writes.

WINSOME HELEN.

She offers you true understanding.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a former school-teacher, and have also taught singing and home economics. I'm twenty-eight years old, have blue eyes and brown, curly hair. I like to read, sew, cook, collect photographs, hike, and am fond of dancing. I want to exchange snapshots and post cards. I understand the meaning of friendship. Pen Pals, I'm waiting for you!

GEORGIA CURLY.

Girls, write to Eager Kit.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May I join your Corner? I'm a colored girl seventeen years old. I've just finished high school and am getting ready to enter college this year. I'm interested in cooking, sewing, and especially writing letters. I promise to answer every letter I receive. Every one, no matter where you are, won't you write to me?

EAGER KIT.

Old Stater extends his welcome.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: My chief wish is to find some true-blue Pals. I'm a young man of twenty, study and read after my day's work, play the piano, and take an interest in life. I'm not especially interested in girls, though some of them are nice. I'm considered good-looking, and have a likable personality. If you fellows want a snapshot and a friendly letter, let me hear from you.

OLD STATER.

Help her to recuperate.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am a girl twenty years old, and am just recovering my health. I've been working ever since I was sixteen, understand human nature, and know what hard breaks some girls have to put up with. I am a bookkeeper and comptometrist. I think I've had an interesting life, and those who write to me won't find my letters dull. Girls between twenty and thirty, won't you please write to me?

BAY ROAD ILA.

She loves writing letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I want to hear from Pen Pals all over the world, and promise to answer every letter. I'm a girl of eighteen, have just finished high school, and am interested in all sports. Above all, I just love to write letters. Come on, all you girls everywhere, sling some ink my way, won't you?

WILKY.

Married Florrie likes good times.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman of twenty-seven. I was born and brought up in the city, but am now living in a small town. I'm fond of fun and good times, and really have oodles of time to write letters, so don't think you'll be neglected, Pals. I will send a photograph of myself to those who'd like to have one. Won't some of you girls write?

MARRIED FLORRIE.

Here's a Pal for you younger boys.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will you find me some Pen Pals? I'm a boy of sixteen, play the violin, piano, guitar, and three other musical instruments. I'm also an expert boxer and wrestler. I'll be glad to exchange snapshots. So let's go, boys!

DYNAMITE.

Betty B. needs your friendship.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a very lonely girl of almost eighteen. I live very near New York, and am interested in every one and everything in the world. I want to hear from girls far and near, and believe I can make my letters very interesting. I have brown eyes and hair, a sunny disposition, like sports, dancing, and writing letters more than anything else. Prompt replies are promised.

BETTY B.

She'll exchange dreams and ideals with you.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: As I haven't many friends I am most anxious for some Pen Pals. I will be a real friend to those who care to write to me. I am patient, and can overlook faults in others. I believe there is more good in every one than some people think. I'm a Jewish girl of twenty-seven. Won't all you girls everywhere write to me?

OH MIN.

Busy Bubbles collects antiques.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a young married woman of twenty-one. I'm not able to do any heavy work as I have been ill for two years, but my hobby is collecting antiques, curios, and odd articles. I spend my time decorating my home, finding new ideas for needlework, and otherwise trying to keep happy and cheerful. I would love to hear from girls and young married women who have similar interests.

BUSY BUBBLES.

Texas Collegian likes fun.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Can a Texas college boy find some interesting Pen Pals? I'm a junior in college, interested in football, basket ball, movies, and just fun in general. I want to hear from some broad-minded young men who are in earnest about making friends. I enjoy writing letters, and those who write to me will receive a prompt reply.

TEXAS COLLEGIAN.

Pals everywhere, write to Mitta.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Will you please ask some of the girls in your Corner to send their letters to me? I want to hear from Pals living in distant countries. I'm a girl of eighteen, short, slender, and considered good-looking. I have plenty of time to write letters, and assure you, Pen Pals, that you will receive a prompt reply. So let's go, girls!

MITTA.

Young mothers, Chi Lou wants your letters.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Would any one care to write to a young mother? I'm twenty-six years old, and have a boy eight years old. In spite of my household cares, I still have plenty of time to write letters, and would love to have some Pen Pals. Please, Pals, write long letters. I'll be sure to reply.

CHI LOU.

Ardis sends an S O S.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm calling for Pals from fourteen to eighteen years of age. I'm a Canadian girl of fifteen, have blond, curly hair, blue eyes, and am full of pep and nonsense. I can tell you all about Canada, if you're interested, so won't you all write to me?

ARDIS.

He spins interesting yarns.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May a young chap of twenty-five enter your Corner? I'm well educated, fairly handsome, liberal-minded, and have traveled quite a bit. I'm fond of swimming and hiking, and when it comes to wanderlust, I suffer from it frequently. At present I'm holding down a secretarial job in a New York office. Fellows, let's get going!

VAGABOND JACK.

Don't let this girl get lonely.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I'm a girl of seventeen, and live on a large farm in Minnesota. My favorite sports are swimming, tennis, and riding. The country here is lovely, but I do get so very lonely. I want to receive letters from Pals everywhere, and hope to get at least one letter from every State in the Union. I'm a senior in high school, have blond, curly hair, blue eyes, and a happy disposition.

MINNESOTA MOUSE.

She'll be a true-blue Pal.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: May one more lonely girl join your Corner? I'm twenty-two years old, and want to hear from Pals who know the true meaning of friendship. I am very fond of all outdoor sports, and especially fishing. I also enjoy music and reading, but as I'm a man hater, I don't go out much with boys. Won't all you girls from twenty-two up drop a line of cheer my way? **Ellesta.**

Let her letters add interest to your life.

Dear Miss Morris: Has a lonesome girl of eighteen a chance to find some Pen Pals? I am interested in all outdoor sports, but my hobbies are dancing, singing, taking snapshots and collecting stickers. I like to travel, but don't seem to do enough of it to satisfy me, and am very fond of the theater. I want to hear from girls all over the world, and especially those who are interested in the stage and radio. **Maryland Crystal.**

You'll want them for your Pals.

Dear Miss Morris: We are a young brother and sister longing for Pen Pals. We are in our teens, love swimming, dancing, skating, and the movies. We are full of pep and always up to some trick, but the friends we have don't mind. We've never had any Pen Pals; do we stand a chance? We promise to answer all letters without delay.

Monk and Monkey.

Mrs. Twenty's waiting for you.

Dear Miss Morris: Hello, everybody! Who wants to write to a peppy young married woman of twenty? I have blue eyes, black hair, a lively disposition, and like plenty of fun. I can't wait to start answering your letters, Pals. I want to hear from girls everywhere, young and old, married and single. I'll be eagerly waiting for your letters. So, let's go!

Mrs. Twenty.

Michigan Bachelor is a writer.

Dear Miss Morris: I'm a rather lonesome bachelor of refined tastes, and am eager to hear from Pals who are interested in art, music, and the finer things of life. I'm a writer by profession and have an understanding of the problems most people have to face. I'm young, brimming with life, and would like to get acquainted with young men who are equally anxious to make friends. I shall be a faithful correspondent and a true friend.

Michigan Bachelor.

These two are air-minded.

Dear Miss Morris: We're a brother and sister, sixteen and eighteen years old. I'm interested in nursing, and Buck is going to be an engineer. We are greatly interested in aviation, like travel, music, and appreciate real friendship. We hope to receive lots of letters, so don't disappoint us, Pals. We want to start a flourishing correspondence. Who'll be first? **Buck and Bucky.**

She'll be a sympathetic friend.

Dear Miss Morris: Does any one care to write to a lonely widow? I'm a professional nurse of almost middle age. I want to hear from girls and married

STREET & SMITH'S
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15¢

women, young and old, and any one who would appreciate a true, sympathetic, trustworthy Pen Pal. Here's some one who will share your joys and the brighter side of life, if only through letters. I would especially like to hear from those living in or near Detroit, although letters from everywhere are welcome. Let me be your friend, Pals. NURSE TRUE HEART.

Tell him your problem, boys.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I would like to hear from fellows of all ages. It doesn't matter where they are living, either. I'm a boy of eighteen, and have nearly finished my first semester's study of law. I'm interested in human nature, and everything that is of interest to others. You can tell me about your troubles, boys, and I'll try to help you. I promise to answer all letters, and will do my best to be interesting. Let's go, boys!

OPEN-MINDED FRANK.

She adores the country.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: It's very nice to live in a big city, but I adore country life. I've traveled a little, but feel it was not enough. Writing letters is my pet hobby, and I hope that girls everywhere, age doesn't matter, will write to me. I can sew, cook, play the piano and saxophone. I collect stamps, love to read, and am studying French. I'm twenty years old, and friends say I'm a very attractive girl.

ILLINOIS LILY.

Nadine's life is lonely; write to her.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Having lived in big cities ever since I can remember, I find existence in a small town rather painful. I've traveled a lot, so perhaps that is why I'm restless. I have no friends here, though at present I'm attending college, and am longing for some Pen Pals. I'm still in my teens, have reddish-brown hair, blue eyes, and am slim. I'm a 1934 modern girl. Come on, everybody! NADINE.

He appreciates art.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please find room in your Corner for my plea. Hi, there, fellows! Do you want a Pal who won't bore you? I'm six feet tall, like to sing and laugh, and enjoy life in general. I have studied art and have been quite successful in it. I will send you some of my sketches—if you want them. I'd like to hear from Pals living in Michigan and California, especially those who also appreciate art, have traveled some, and are between twenty and thirty years of age. I'll answer every letter. LIVE-WIRE ED.

She lives in fascinating Hawaii.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: My plea is for lots of Pen Pals who will write to a girl living in Hawaii, the "paradise of the Pacific." I want to hear from Spanish and English girls who have felt the lure of tropical countries. I promise faithfully to answer all letters promptly, and I'm sure my replies will be far from dull. I've had an interesting life so far. May I tell you all about myself, girls?

LOTUS BUD OF HAWAII.

She'll console lonely hearts.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: I am most interested in finding Pen Pals through The Friendliest Corner. I'm a girl of nineteen, have been disappointed in love, and can sympathize with those who have had heartaches. I'd like to hear from those who are lonely and blue, because I believe that I can help them to cheer up. Girls between eighteen and twenty-one, won't you write to me at once?

INVITING SYLVIA.

Western interests are her lot.

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Please may I enter your Corner? I'm a brunette who'd like to see the rest of the world as happy as I am. I'm not exactly lonesome, but I love to write letters, and want to hear from girls everywhere, particularly cowgirls living on ranches in the West. One and all, I'm asking you to please write to

GAY DAREDEVIL ACE.

Want a Pal in far-off England, boys?

DEAR MISS MORRIS: Does any one care to write to a lonely young man of thirty-two, at present living in Yorkshire, England? Then send your letters my way. I've had an interesting life, and am sure I can keep my Pen Pals busy writing to me. I have an even-tempered disposition, try to be generous with every one, and the few friends I have seem to have no objection to having me around. I would more than appreciate hearing from some American Pals. **English Arthur.**

Franny'll share her interests.

Dear Miss Morris: I'm a sixteen-year-old girl, in my third year of high school, fond of all sports, especially tennis, basket ball, skating, and hockey. I have wavy brown hair, hazel eyes, and a happy disposition. I want to hear from girls around my age. Who'll write to lonesome me? **Franny.**

Jinkie's a prospective aviatrix.

Dear Miss Morris: Have you room for a very youthful Pen Pal seeker? I want lots of Pen Pals. I'm a girl of fifteen, attend high school, and live near many orange groves in California. I like some outdoor sports, but am interested mostly in aviation and hope to try it in the near future. I have traveled all over the United States, Mexico, and Canada. Those of you who want a true Pal, address your letters to **Jinkie.**

Pals, write to Brunet Teacher.

Dear Miss Morris: Has a young woman of thirty-three a chance to hear from Pen Pals around her own age? I'm a school-teacher living in the South. I'm interested in outdoor life and sports, enjoy getting together with people, and make friends easily, although there aren't many people I haven't met in my town. Won't some of you older Pals give me a chance to be your friend? I'll exchange snapshots, and will answer all letters. **Brunet Teacher.**

He's in close touch with authors.

Dear Miss Morris: I would very much like to hear from red-blooded Americans. I'm a young man whose hobbies are writing letters, collecting snapshots, making friends, and traveling. Nothing is nicer than having many true friends, and I think that boys make better friends than girls. My occupation is typing manuscripts for authors. It's a fine job, but I have plenty of time on my hands to do my own correspondence. Fellows, you'll not be sorry if you write to me. **Coleman Kenny.**

Waterloo Lillian lives in England.

Dear Miss Morris: I just can't resist asking you to help me find some Pen Pals. I'm a young girl of twenty, and as I work only until eleven o'clock each day, I've plenty of time to write letters. I have red-gold hair, blue-gray eyes, and a cheerful nature. My hobbies are reading, music, swimming, knitting, dancing, and I'm fond of the movies. No matter how many girls write to me, I promise to answer every letter. I'd like to hear from Pals everywhere. **Waterloo Lillian.**

She'll tell you her reducing secret.

Dear Miss Morris: I'm a young girl of twenty-one, like all sports, but best of all dancing. I used to weigh one hundred and fifty pounds, but I have reduced to a hundred and fifteen. I'll tell you how to reduce, girls, if you'll write to me. I'm really lonely, and want to hear from girls everywhere in the United States. I'll exchange snapshots with you. Drop me a line, Pals. **Danbury Blondie.**

Let Queenie discuss her travels with you.

Dear Miss Morris: May I, too, join your happy Corner? I'm a girl of seventeen, love all sports and music. I have traveled in many foreign countries, and can tell you about my interesting experiences among strange people. Please, every one, write to **Queenie.**

Even a politician gets lonely.

Dear Miss Morris: I'm a young man of twenty-four, interested in the politics of my State. I'd like to hear from young men everywhere. I promise not to talk shop, and will write lengthy letters about everything new and old. My pet hobbies are swimming, travel, collecting books and tricks in sleight of hand. **Valet.**

THE FRIEND IN NEED

Department Conducted by

Laura Alston Brown

Mrs. Brown will be glad to solve in these pages problems on which you desire advice. Your letters will be regarded confidentially and signatures will be withheld.

Although Mrs. Brown receives more letters than she can possibly print in the department, she answers all the others by mail. So, lay your problem before her with the knowledge that it will have her full attention.

Address Mrs. Laura Alston Brown, Street & Smith's Love Story Magazine, 79 Seventh Avenue, New York, N. Y.

IT has, no doubt, occurred to many newly married couples that the business of rushing away on a honeymoon trip could, for various reasons, be either dispensed with or postponed, especially when the bride is a modern young business woman who feels that she cannot absent herself from her work for any length of time. But if we give way to mellow sentiment, there is something so lastingly sweet and romantic about a honeymoon—the delightful holiday of two married sweethearts who, for a short period, can feel free from immediate responsibilities and the trying adjustments of married life. Southern Sweetheart can't decide whether to take a honeymoon trip, or begin housekeeping at once.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am faced with a very puzzling problem. Like many other girls of twenty-one, I have met the right man and we are planning to marry in the spring. However, I find it very hard to decide whether we should go away or start our life together without too many sudden changes.

Do you think that a young business woman should take a honeymoon trip when she marries? Bob, my fiancé, insists that it's up to me to decide, but I can't make up my mind.

It has been agreed that I am to keep on working after we are married, because we will need both salaries to keep things going, and I know that many young brides find marriage a bore when time hangs too heavily on their hands.

I have a rather responsible job which needs my constant attention, and, besides that, I think that the various adjustments all young couples have to go through when they marry cause enough upheavals.

But whenever I stop to think about it, I notice that almost every girl I know who is planning to marry is looking forward to the time when she will go away on her honeymoon with the man of her dreams.

My mother thinks that Bob and I should have a honeymoon trip, but my older sister argues that in these modern times sensible young couples can easily get along without a trip of this kind.

I would like your advice on this problem, Mrs. Brown, and will gladly welcome any suggestions that Friend In Need readers care to make to help me decide this honeymoon question.

SOUTHERN SWEETHEART.

Sometimes it seems that the only way to make a decision—no matter how important the question—is to toss a coin and take the consequences. All joking aside, however, although some people are inclined to look upon the time-honored honeymoon custom as an upsetting ordeal, many young couples feel it is the ideal way to begin married life.

Most people feel that there is a rare sweetness and a feeling of elation in going away from the rest of the world, if only for a short time. On the other hand, many young married couples would probably find just as much joy in marriage if they started housekeeping immediately after the wedding ceremony.

Responsible jobs, of course, cannot very well be left hanging in midair. But don't you think, my dear, that some one else could look after the more important details of your work until you returned? If the responsibility of your job worries you, perhaps you could go away for only two weeks, or start in housekeeping at once and make week-ends your special kind of honeymoon holiday.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: At nineteen, when I was a telegraph messenger boy, I started going with a girl of sixteen. I worked myself up until, at twenty-one, I became a commercial telegraph operator. The salary was good, and I thought I was old enough to get married. I proposed to my girl friend, and was accepted.

The position I held, however, was a little too heavy for one of my short experience, and the consequences were that I worried about it so much that I was obliged to give it up. This, of course, changed all my plans regarding marriage, and I decided to try my luck in a distant State.

Through a misunderstanding in our letters, my sweetheart and I broke our engagement, and we both started going out with other friends. When I returned home a year later, I met her again, and somehow we made up. For a year everything ran smoothly, although I was not working steadily and we couldn't get married.

A few weeks ago my fiancée went visiting out of town, and having nothing better to do, I went to a skating rink where I met a girl with whom, I think, I fell in love. Recently, this girl admitted that she cared for me, and has offered to give up all her other boy friends if I would break my engagement.

But how can I do that, Mrs. Brown? I know that my fiancée loves me, and I would hate to hurt her. The question is, should I break off with her and take a chance on wrecking our lives, or would that be too selfish?

I am still very fond of my fiancée and will always consider her a very fine person. We might marry, and I could try to make her happy, but do you think that it would work out?

My new girl friend doesn't care whether I have a job or not. She says that my future prospects make no difference in her affection for me. I have tried to find out how my fiancée would feel if we were to break up again, but she wouldn't even discuss it. Don't you think that she would forget me in time? I feel sure that your opinion will be of great value to me.

STEVE.

As an engaged man, no matter what the circumstances, you are not being fair to your fiancée if you date another girl.

If you are very sure that you no longer care for the girl you're engaged to, it would be nothing less than sheer folly to go ahead with the marriage. Better to hurt her now, than let her gradually realize that she does not possess your love. It is tragic when, after a five-year courtship, a young couple are nearer a breaking point than the consummation of their hopes and dreams.

On the other hand, if you take stock and try to analyze your emotions, as well as your mental attitude, you may find that what seems to be love is merely the kind of mutual attraction that often springs up without the slightest warning between two young people whose tastes are mutual. I suggest that you stop seeing this other girl for a few months before you take any serious steps toward breaking your engagement.

Any girl seriously interested in a young man would be concerned about his prospects and anxious to see that he got ahead in life.

Dear Mrs. Brown: I am fifteen years old, and my parents are very strict with me. They say I am too young to go out with boys, but I am allowed to have the crowd come up to my house.

When I am invited to a dance, I always refuse because I haven't a boy friend I could ask to take me. There is a social club my parents want me to join. It's a church organization, and after the meetings the boys and girls dance and have a good time together. But all the girls have their boy friends there, and I would feel terribly out of place without one.

A few of the boys haven't girl friends, but I'm not allowed to have boy friends. I don't go anywhere, and even though my parents say I can have all my friends over, I know so few. The girls I do know all have boy friends. At times I feel so bad I think I'll never have any friends.

My parents told me that I can have dates when I am seventeen, but by that time I probably won't have any friends at all, if I don't get around now.

Do you think I should join this club, Mrs. Brown? Perhaps this will sound very silly, but so many girls of my age have boy friends that I feel sort of left out. I could sneak out to make friends with some boys, but my parents would find it out and then they wouldn't let me out at all. Do you think I should go to this club with a girl? Thank you in advance for any advice you give me. Marjorie.

By all means join the club, child, especially if your parents want you to. If you feel shy about going alone, why not take a girl friend with you? That will help you to feel less self-conscious.

Your parents are quite right. You have plenty of time for boy friends. Girls of your age can find many interesting things to do without following in the footsteps of much older girls in order to have some fun. Since you have your parents' permission to invite your friends to your home, you might give a little informal party once in a while and tell the girls you know to bring some of their friends. This will help you to widen your circle of friends.

It's natural for girls of your age to want friends and good times, but you should be careful what sort of friends you choose and what kind of good times you go in for. You will never go wrong by obeying your parents.

Dear Mrs. Brown: I would like to say a few words to Perplexed, whose letter recently appeared in your column. I feel that I have been very lucky, and perhaps my letter will be of help to her.

I have been engaged to a boy for three years. He is also crippled, although not so badly that he can't work at any job. His handicap is due to infantile paralysis.

When we became engaged he had a job, but didn't have a cent saved. But when he had a nice sum in the bank, he got sick and had a hard time. He wrote me from the hospital and told me that we'd have to part, as he thought I wouldn't care to be tied to a sick man.

But I didn't feel that way at all, Mrs. Brown, and I knew how he felt about being crippled. I've stuck by him for three years, and now we expect to be married soon.

Here's what I want to say to Perplexed: She and her fiancé ought to get together and talk things over. After my fiancé spent all his money on doctors' bills, his father offered to help him take a course in radio work. Jim went to a school in Chicago, and was told that in our State the government offered a course of this kind and others free to the crippled.

Jim came back, and upon investigation found this to be true, and that the same thing is done in other States, also, though we don't know if all the States do this. Jim is now taking up printing, and as soon as he is finished he has a job waiting for him in a newspaper-publishing house.

If Perplexed will tell her friend to find out what can be done, perhaps he can take a course of some kind that will enable him to work without using his feet all the time, and it will also give him a chance to prove his love for her.

I know how you feel about your boy friend, Perplexed, but if you stand by and try to help find a way for both of you, it will bring you closer to each other and you'll be very happy.

I hope you will try to do all you can, and I wish you joy and happiness.

IRENE.

Thank you so much for your letter, Irene, and I hope that Perplexed will not miss it. I'm sure it will help her to buck up and feel less hopeless. Sometimes it seems very hard to make plans for the future when there are so many obstacles, but we never know what we can do until we try. Good luck, Irene!

DEAR MRS. BROWN: I am a girl, eighteen years old, smoke and drink a little, but outside of these two habits I am a respectable girl. The boys who date me never attempt any tricks.

Last winter I met Al. He is thirty years old, is a successful business man, and is well-to-do financially. He tells me he loves me and wants me to marry him, but I'm very undecided.

Early this past summer I met Charlie, and since then I have been dating both boys. The last time I went out with Charlie he also asked me to marry him. He is twenty-three years old and has a fairly good business of his own.

But I can't seem to make up my mind, Mrs. Brown, which boy to accept. Al and I often quarrel, though we make up easily enough. Charlie and I get along fine and seldom disagree. I'm in love with both, and feel I could be happy with either one. However, one thing that bothers me is that when I want to go some place, Al always complains that he's tired, and this usually starts a quarrel. Some of my friends have told me that before Al went with me he used to come to their parties and stay until all hours of the morning. But when he's with me, he's always tired, and wants to go home early.

Won't you please help me decide which one to accept? I feel Al is a little too selfish.

DIVIDED LOVE.

Al's excuse does seem to have the earmarks of a selfish attitude. A man can't be tired all the time! But before you go on worrying about either man, has it occurred to you that when a girl feels she can be happy with one or the other of her suitors, she is not in love with either? A girl can be fond of two boys, but when it comes to marriage, it would not be possible for her to have exactly the same feeling toward both young men.

If you were really in love, child, your heart would do your choosing for you, and there would be no guessing as to which man is the right one. I doubt if you're in love at all, and you shouldn't feel that you must accept one or the other.

As long as you remain undecided, chances are that you are only interested in them in a friendly fashion, and I suggest that you continue on that basis with them and have other boy friends, too. A girl never loses out by waiting until she is sure it's love on both sides.

DEAR MRS. BROWN: Can a girl be too decent? This has been my problem for some time. I want to explain my situation and hope you can help me.

I am a girl of eighteen. I have a lovely home and the nicest parents any girl could wish for, but it seems that I am not able to get a boy friend like other girls.

Every one tells me I am very good-looking, and I am considered one of the best-dressed girls in town. I haven't any physical defects, and I'm not a bit conceited or snooty.

I don't smoke or drink, and I simply refuse to neck or pet. No matter who the boy is, I never let him kiss me the first time he takes me out, and most of the boys seldom come back the second time. I guess I'm just a flat tire.

If you were me, would you let down the ideals you had, Mrs. Brown? It seems that only then can a girl have some boy friends, for the boys won't date a girl if she's straight and refuses to be mauled over.

I've almost given up hope that I will ever meet a boy who will appreciate a respectable girl and admire me for myself. Am I too goody-goody?

I belong to several clubs and have traveled a little more than most girls, but everywhere I go the boys are all the same.

STILL HOPING.

Stop worrying about whether a girl can be too respectable. I think it's the boys who ought to worry about their crudeness and inability to appreciate the finer qualities in a girl. Be proud of your high ideals, and don't try to conceal them, whether some of the boys you meet believe in them or not.

The so-called friendships or popularity with boys who expect every girl to slide down to any level they suggest aren't worth a thought. One of these days the right man will come along, and then you will be ever so glad that you have kept your ideals and didn't change your ideas about how boys and girls should behave.

Dear Mrs. Brown: I am twenty years old and my fiancé is twenty-three. We have been engaged a little over one year, and it has been the most miserable year of my whole life, because Walter's jealousy has made me terribly unhappy.

I have been absolutely true to him, and I love him dearly, but honestly, Mrs. Brown, he is killing my love. He doesn't trust me out of his sight, and if I as much as leave the house for a minute when he isn't with me, it's just plain war. He can think up more things that I might have done than I could ever have time to do.

He expects me to come straight home from work and stay in, unless he takes me out. I can't even speak to some of my old friends if I happen to meet them on the street.

If we go to a show and I see some one I know and smile in greeting, he's angry for the rest of the evening and sulks like a baby. But *he* can give every pretty girl the most searching look, and I mustn't mind. I've tried to talk and argue about his jealousy, but it has no weight with him at all.

It's getting so I can't stand it, and I would break the engagement to-morrow, even though I know I would never be happy without him or love another as dearly, but I know that he would be heartbroken, too.

We have stopped going to parties and to some of my girl friends' homes because of his insane jealousy. Why can't he see that he is simply killing my affection for him? Mitzie.

I don't want to sound pessimistic, but more often than not it's a most difficult job trying to cure a man of his jealousy, and you have all my sympathy, Mitzie. When a man is as jealous as your fiancé, it shows that he is afraid some other man may come along and that you may fall in love with him. Psychologists have explained that jealousy is a feeling of inferiority which arises from the idea that the sufferer is not as good as the next person, and that he is being looked down on. This, of course, is silly and childish.

I suggest that the very first time you find your friend in good humor, you try to talk this over with him. Tell him in a friendly but frank and definite way that you do love him; but, if he insists on continuing to express such groundless jealous spasms and accusations, he is bound to kill your affection and respect.

Try to make him understand that unless he treats you with the trust and respect due you, you can't possibly go on loving him. If you two succeed in reaching an understanding, I'm sure you'll both be much happier. He should try to realize that, even if you are engaged to him, you can't expect to stop being human and avoid all your friends. That's unnatural and certainly unreasonable. To keep happy and interested, we should have friendly contacts with others.

And if the worst comes to worst—which I hope it doesn't—and he still refuses to see your viewpoint, then maybe it would be better to call it quits until he finds his way to better understanding.

Dear Mrs. Brown: My family life was never a happy one. There was always a fight going on in the family, and I could never go out without getting bawled out when I returned.

Bringing friends home was out of the question. The house was always messed up, and things were never in order. If I did tidy up, the others would upset the place in ten minutes. Besides, I was always afraid that my friends would be insulted by my folks' attitude toward them.

At eighteen, I felt I couldn't stand it any longer, and I ran away and married a man I thought would be good to me. I was not in love with him; I have not found real love yet.

I didn't know my husband very well before we were married, and I was frantic when I found out that he was careless and lazy. I could not go home to my folks, because they wouldn't have anything to do with me, and leaving him was out of the question, because I had no place to go.

Three months after our marriage, my husband quit work because he had a fight with his boss, and as we had hardly any money, I found work waiting on people in a delicatessen store. Then my husband stopped looking for work. He'd stay in bed all day until late afternoon, and then go out with his men friends. Of course, I had to give him money, and pay rent, too, besides seeing to it that we didn't starve.

One year later I fainted at work. I had a complete nervous breakdown, and my mother thawed out enough to take me home with her. They made my husband stay away from me, and didn't even let him in the house to see me. As soon as I could get up, I got a divorce. I don't know how I ever pulled through all the I-told-you-so's from every one. But don't you think that if they had treated me right at home in the first place, all this would never have happened?

My mother and dad won't let me go out with young men who have jobs and earn their living, because they are always preaching that one unfortunate marriage was enough. I've learned my lesson, and am going to wait for love. Mother treats me all right, but she's always lecturing, and won't let me go anywhere except to work. I'm so tired of it all, as things stand, that I feel anything would be better than to have to listen to talk and more talk.

Must my life be made miserable because I married the wrong man, Mrs. Brown? HEARTSICK.

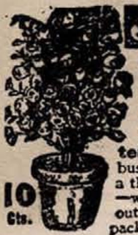
As long as you allow yourself to be rather spineless, my dear, I'm afraid you're going to be stepped on a good deal more than you have been.

Has it occurred to you that you literally drifted into an unfortunate marriage because you lacked the energy to fight against your family's treatment of you? And after you realized that you married the wrong man, you didn't have enough gumption to lift a finger to set things straight, although you were supporting yourself and could have easily made a change by leaving.

Now you're of age, you're making your own living, and yet you haven't the courage to stand up for yourself and insist that your mother leave you to choose your own friends, and let you go out a little more. Instead of insisting on your rights, you're coddling your grief and taking no steps to assert yourself. And why? Because you don't seem to have sufficient courage to live your own life as you want to live it.

I'm afraid that unless you snap out of it, dear, you're going to continue being unhappy. You shouldn't be afraid to reach out for the things you want in life.

Try Some of These Remarkable Seed Novelties



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Amazingly Prolific—Easily Grown From Seed

The Ground Almond has a flavor that is MOST EXCELLENT, resembling the cocoanut. The meat is snow white, covered with a shell or skin of brown color. It grows close to the surface and anything from 200 to 300 Almonds may be expected from a single nut. There is no trouble whatever in growing anywhere and in any kind of soil. May be planted any time, and in eight or ten weeks from time of planting you will have an ENORMOUS CROP of the MOST DELICIOUS ALMONDS YOU EVER TASTED. **Seeds 15c Pkt.**

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Blooms only at night, giving forth the most delightful scented fragrance for quite a distance. Causes much comment. For house or garden. Also valuable because of rare perfume made from it. **SEEDS, 10c pkt., 3 for 25c.**

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Marvel of the Philippines. Leaves curl, fronds droop when touched. Apparently resents interference. A handsome shrub for house or garden; very curious and interesting. **Seeds, 15c pkt., 3 for 40c.**

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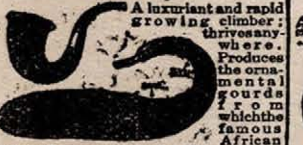

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Peanuts can be easily cultivated. Their culture is very simple and exceedingly interesting. Mammoth Peanuts grow to an astonishing size. It is a good producer, very prolific, and the **giant nuts** have a thick, heavily ribbed protecting shell. The plant is very attractive, the leaves being of odd shape and a handsome green shade, tinted through the center with white. You will derive much pleasure cultivating this interesting species. **Seeds 15c pkt., 3 pkts. for 40c.**

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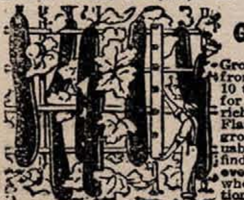
Unusually strong and vigorous growing vine. Attains twice the size of ordinary varieties. Grows readily on fences, poles, trellises, etc. One hill will keep an entire family supplied all summer. **Seeds 15c packt, 3 for 40c, postpaid.**



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Most rapid growing vine known. Will grow 20 feet in one week. Luxuriant foliage, lovely purple flowers, very fragrant. Nothing to equal it for shade purposes and quick growth. **Seeds 15c packet, 3 for 40c.**

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Produces enormous crop of long, slender, round pods, of excellent quality for snap beans. Pods grow from 2 to 5 feet in length. Very tender and fine flavor. The vines are rampant growers; an interesting curiosity. **Seeds 15c pkt., 3 for 40c**

THE REMARKABLE FIREFLY PLANT A Vine that Blooms at Night

Fills the Atmosphere with Fragrant Aroma

One of the most rapid growing vines known. Under favorable conditions this vine has been known to grow OVER 25 FEET IN A SINGLE WEEK. In a very short space of time indeed the Vine has climbed to a great height, and is covered with IMMENSE FLOWERS, from 5 to 7 inches in diameter. It is, indeed, a great novelty, for, unlike other plants, the flowers OPEN IN THE EVENING, and remain open until about noon the following day. In dull weather they will remain open all day. It is a most INTERESTING SIGHT to watch the opening and closing of the flowers as the clouds appear and disperse. As the flowers open they give forth the most DELIGHTFUL AROMA and the whole atmosphere around is full of scented fragrance. It is always the object of favorable comment, and much curiosity is aroused by people passing at night time as to the cause of the charming aroma, frequently stopping in an endeavor to satisfy their curiosity. **PRICE, 19 CENTS packet, two packets for 35 CENTS, POSTPAID.** JOHNSON SMITH & CO.

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A luscious berry that may be grown and ripened from seed in any soil or climate in 3 months. The flavor is fine and unsurpassed for eating raw, cooked, canned or preserved in any form. The fruit is blue-black in color, and tastes like a luscious, rich blueberry. One bush will produce an enormous amount of fruit, yielding great masses of rich fruit all Summer and Fall. **Packet, 10c, 3 pkts. for 25c, postpaid.**

Shoo Fly Plant

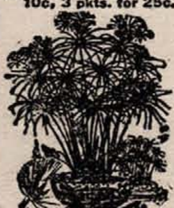
A very remarkable Botanical curiosity you should have. Though quite odorless it is said flies will not remain in a room where it is grown. Bears very pretty blossoms; blooms summer and winter. Grows rapidly from seed. **SEEDS 15c pkt.; 3 for 40c, postpaid.**

Banana Musk Melon

Quite a curiosity. Looks and smells like a banana. Peculiar shape and its delicious flavor make it well worth your while cultivating. Flesh is deep and of exquisite flavor. Very high prices are obtained in choice city markets, as high as a dollar sometimes being demanded for one single specimen. **Seeds 10c, 3 pkts. for 25c.**

The Great Japanese Umbrella Palm A Graceful House or Conservatory Plant

Easily Grown From Seed Winter or Summer



The Japanese Umbrella Palm is a semi-aquatic plant. It is easily grown from seed either in a bowl of water or in very damp soil. Probably the most usual, as well as the most interesting method, is to cultivate the plant in a bowl or jardiniere filled with water, with two or three inches of good garden soil at the bottom. The seeds soon commence to germinate, and the plant shoots up stems two to three feet high and rapidly assumes a most pretty palm-like appearance, as shown in the engraving. The tops of the stems are surmounted by a whorl of umbrella-shaped leaves, of a waxy appearance. We will send a package of this seed, with full instructions for culture, **for only 15c or three packets for 40c postpaid.**

Butterfly's Own Bush

This plant is a veritable refuge or haven for butterflies, and it attracts all the most beautiful types of butterflies to the neighborhood. Bees, too, are very fond of it. It is a pretty plant bearing perfectly double flowers, ranging from white to rich crimson, deep red and pink, lilac and other delicate shades. **Packet 10 cents, 3 for 25 cents postpaid.**

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Very curious, odd looking, strange species of plants; will thrive anywhere with little or no care. Flowers are of exquisite beauty and delightfully fragrant. You will be astonished at the odd looks of the Cacti just sprouting. **Packet, 10 cents, three packets for 25 cents. postpaid.**

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Ferns can be grown from seed. Try your luck growing these beautiful plants for indoors or outdoors. Choicest mixed varieties. **Packet 10c., 3 for 25c.**

Chinese Cabbage

Novelty from China and should be grown in every garden. Seems to be a cross between Celery and Cos Lettuce. Flavor is more mild than any other cabbage. **Can be served on the table** and eaten raw or cooked like cabbage, spinach or lettuce or made into salad. Grows very rapidly, easy to cultivate. You can create quite a sensation by cultivating this remarkable novelty. **Seeds, 15c packet, 3 pkts. for 40c.**

FAMOUS MEXICAN FIREFLY PLANT

Beautiful hedge plant, grows 2 to 2½ feet high and resembling a closely clipped ornamental evergreen. The globe-shaped or pyramidal bushes are close and compact, and of a pleasing light green color. May be grown singly or in the form of a hedge or background. In early autumn the whole bush becomes carmine or blood red, hence the name of Mexican Fire Plant, or "Burning Bush," as it is sometimes called. **Selected Seeds, 10c**

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The best plant for hanging baskets. Masses of rich, gleaming foliage droop in a very graceful manner. The foliage when cut for decorative purposes will last for weeks in water. The seed pods are very pretty red berries adding to its beauty. **Packet, 25c, 3 pkts. for 65c postpaid**

TREE OF HEAVEN

This splendid ornamental tree is a native of China; and is called the Tree of Heaven, on account of its great beauty. Very hardy, thrives in any soil, no matter how poor, and grows from 6 to 10 feet high from seed the first summer. The leaves are from 5 to 6 feet in any length, giving it a grand appearance. Nothing outside the tropics can rival it for lawn decoration. Large panicles of bloom, followed in season by great clusters of colored seed pods, make the tree a continual thing of beauty. **Packet, 15c; 3 packets 40c**

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Nearly everyone is likely to suffer from poorly functioning Kidneys at times because modern foods and drinks, weather changes, exposure, colds, nervous strain, worry and over-work often place an extra heavy load on the Kidneys.

But when your Kidneys need help, don't take chances with drastic or irritating drugs. Be careful. If poorly functioning Kidneys or Bladder make you suffer from Getting Up Nights, Leg Pains, Nervousness, Stiffness, Burning, Smarting, Itching Acidity, Rheumatic Pains, Lumbago, Loss of Vitality, Dark Circles under the eyes, or Dizziness, don't waste a minute. Try the Doctor's prescription Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex). See for yourself the amazing quickness with which it soothes, tones and cleans raw, sore irritated membranes.

Cystex is a remarkably successful prescription for poorly functioning Kidneys and Bladder. It is helping millions of sufferers, and many say that in just a day or so it helped them sleep like a baby, brought new strength and energy, eased rheumatic pains and stiffness—made them feel years younger. Cystex starts circulating through the system in 15 minutes, helping the Kidneys in their work of cleaning out the blood and removing poisonous acids and wastes in the system. It does its work quickly and positively but does not contain any dopes, narcotics or habit-forming drugs. The formula is in every package.

Because of its amazing and almost world-wide success the Doctor's Prescription known as Cystex (pronounced Siss-tex) is offered to sufferers of poor Kidney and Bladder functions under the fair-play guarantee to fix you up to your complete satisfaction or money back on return of empty package. It's only 3c a dose. Ask your druggist for Cystex today and see for yourself how much younger, stronger and better you can feel by simply cleaning out your Kidneys. Cystex must do the work or cost you nothing.

Cystex
SISS-TEX
The Knox Company

City Health Doctor Praises Cystex

Doctors and druggists everywhere approve of the prescription Cystex because of its splendid ingredients and quick action. For instance, Dr. W. R. George, graduate Medical Dept., University of Indiana, former Health Commissioner of Indianapolis, and Medical Director for insurance company 10 years, recently wrote the following letter:

Dr. W. R. George

"There is little question but what properly functioning Kidney and Bladder organs are vital to the health. Insufficient Kidney excretions are the cause of much needless suffering with aching back, weakness, painful joints and rheumatic pains, headaches and a general run-down, exhausted body. This condition also interferes with normal rest at night by causing the sufferer to rise frequently for relief, and results in painful excretion, itching, smarting and burning. I am of the opinion that Cystex definitely corrects frequent causes (poor kidney functions) of such conditions and I have actually prescribed in my own practice for many years past the same ingredients contained in your formula. Cystex not only exerts a splendid influence in flushing poisons from the urinary tract, but also has an antiseptic action and assists in freeing the blood of retained toxins. Believing as I do that so meritorious a product deserves the endorsement of the Medical Profession, I am happy indeed to lend my name and photograph for your use in advertising Cystex." Signed W. R. George, M. D.

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JAPANESE
OIL

Mr. A. S. R. of New York City writes:
"I had 3 bald spots the size of a half-dollar. I used Japanese Oil for 3 months and now my bald spots are entirely covered with hair."

JAPANESE OIL, the antiseptic counter-irritant, is used by thousands for baldness, falling hair, loose dandruff and scalp itch. Price 60c. Economy size $1. All druggists'.

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Send name and address today and only 10c to cover mailing cost. TRY IT FREE.

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DR. W. D. SMITH
INVENTOR

An enlarged, inflamed or faulty Prostate Gland very often causes Lameback, Frequent Night Rising, Leg Pains, Pelvic Pains, Lost Vigor, Insomnia, etc. Many physicians endorse massage as a safe effective treatment. (See Reference Book of the Medical Sciences, Vol. VII, 3rd edition). Use "PROSAGER," a new invention which enables any man to massage his Prostate Gland in the privacy of his home. It often brings relief with the first treatment and must help or it costs you nothing. No Drugs or Electricity.

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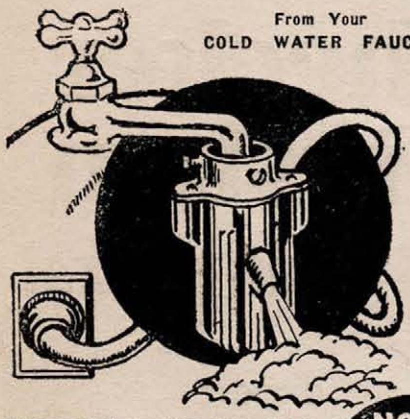

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WORKS LIKE MAGIC Just snap the Wizard on cold water faucet, plug into A.C. or D.C. electric outlet and *Ziss — Hot running water!* No muss or fuss. Wizard attaches quick as a wink! Made of SHOCK-PROOF porcelain. It's a little beauty!

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Director Belt gets at fat and quickly removes it by gentle massage-like reducing and absorbing action.

Loose, fallen abdominal muscles are strengthened and go back where they belong. Every movement of your body causes a gentle, changing pressure, bringing results formerly obtained only by regular massage and exercise.

Reduce Like This Let us prove our claims. We'll send a Director for trial. If you don't get results you owe nothing.

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Note how much better your clothes fit and look without a heavy waistline to pull them out of shape. Improves your appearance instantly. "I received my belt last Monday," writes S.L. Brown, Trenton, N.J. "I feel 15 years younger; no more tired and bloated feelings after meals."

Director puts snap in your step, helps to relieve "shortness of breath," restores your vigor. You look, feel years younger when burden of fat is gone.

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"I was 44 inches around the waist — now down to 37½—feel better—constipation gone—know belt has added years to my life." — D. W. Bilderback, Wichita. Director massage-like action aids nature to promote regularity without use of harsh, irritating cathartics. Stop drugs, exercises and dieting. Try this easy way.

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Gus Martel's world famous, complete boxing, copyrighted fighting and training course published today, sent you on approval. How could he dare unless it was the world's best? Besides you get his copyrighted knockout punches that enabled him to knock out over 500 men all within 3 rounds and become world's knockout record holder, famous developer of champions and undefeated amateur lightweight champion of the world. Since Gus showed:

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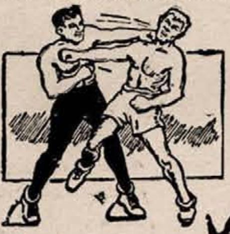

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Not used or rebuilt. A new Remington Portable. Carrying case *free*. Use 10 days without cost. If you keep it, it's yours for only 10c a day. Write today. Say: Tell me how I can get a Remington Portable on 10-day free trial offer for only 10c a day. Remington Rand Inc., Dept. BS-3, Buffalo, N. Y.

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Feel young again—full of ambition and pep. Take Rico-Brasil Mate'. It picks you right up. Makes you **feel** like **going places and doing things.** Keeps your system **free** from the **poisons** that **slow you up.** No need to act **OLD** or feel **OLD** if you use Rico-Brasil Mate' three times a day. Improvement noticed in 24 hours. Endorsed by Doctors and Scientists. Month's supply for $1.00 by mail, postpaid. With "Folder of Facts." (Will Send C. O. D., if Preferred.)

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for pile suffering. If you have piles in any form write for a **FREE** sample of **Page's Pile Tablets** and you will bless the day that you read this. **Write today. E. R. Page Co., 2315-B Page Bldg., Marshall, Mich.**

NOT HOUSE-BROKEN!

We call him Scotty. When your **guests** put cigarettes in the ash tray—and pat Scotty's head he'll raise his little hind leg and PUT OUT THE CIGARETTE. Convenient water sack inside Scotty is easily filled. **At last a canine's most inconvenient habit has** been turned into a practical and extremely funny use! Scotty mounted on ash tray—both in attractive bronze finish.

Scotty may be had for $1.50 postpaid. Money back if not completely satisfied. Remit to

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ONLY $1.50 each, delivered

I WON $5,000.00
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Would YOU, TOO, Like to

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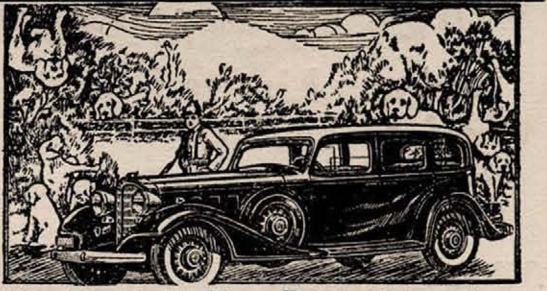

Now Hundreds More Prizes Being Given

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This is our sensational new way to advertise—giving away big cash prizes—besides thousands in EXTRA cash rewards. **Not a cent of your money needed now or ever to win $2,500.**

Can YOU Find 4 Dogs in Picture Above?

Tell me quick! Some are upside down. Some look straight at you. **Hundreds have won** big cash rewards in other campaigns conducted by men in this firm. Here are a few. Mrs. Kate Needham, a housewife in Oregon won $4,705. Ira Burroughs, past 70 years old in a little Texas town won $2,770. Anna Jacobson in a small New York town won over $5,000. Sister M. Crescence in Arkansas won $1,490. Now comes **your** chance. You are GUARANTEED to win a cash reward if you take an active part. Not a lottery. No luck needed. Hurry—get started quick by finding 4 dogs. Not a cent of your money needed to buy anything. Big cash rewards are being won every day. In addition to giving Buick I will pay

$1,000.00 EXTRA for Promptness

to First Prize winner. Not only **one** person, but **hundreds** will be rewarded. In case of ties, duplicate prizes will be given. All the money to pay prizes is in the Bankers Trust Co. at Des Moines. I invite you to look us up through any bank in Des Moines, any credit agency, business house, magazine, newspaper, railroad.

$10,000.00 REWARD will be paid to any worthy charity if anyone can prove that we do not really give away all these thousands of dollars in cash prizes—or that all this prize money is not on deposit in the bank.

WRITE QUICK

Send no money. Mark dogs found, clip picture, mail quick—or write on penny post-card how many dogs you find. For replying I will tell you how you may **also** win big EXTRA cash rewards and $2,500 too. Answer NOW! Tell me which you would prefer to win—$2,500 all cash or Buick and $1,000.

Merrold Johnson, Mgr. Dept. 40, Des Moines, Iowa.

A Year's Protection Against
SICKNESS

Less than 3c a Day!

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CASH *or sympathy?*

You Can Decide NOW Which You Want

You Can Now Protect Yourself and Family for Only . . .
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You can't tell what the future holds for you. No one in the world knows whether Sickness or Accidents await you just ahead. Few escape without accident—so you must prepare. You must take steps to protect yourself.

RIGHT *NOW* is the time to decide!

Yes. .*right now!* Even while you are reading this page, some flood or fire, some automobile or train disaster, is taking its toll of human life or limb. And elsewhere, some contagious disease or sickness, is wreaking its havoc. Should some of this trouble strike you, which do you want to receive. .CASH or SYMPATHY? *Now* you can take your choice, *afterwards* it will be too late.

$25.00 Weekly to $10,000 Cash!

In Case of Stated Accidents or Sickness or Accidental Death.

COST $10.00 FULL YEAR'S PROTECTION.

Won't you have peace of mind when you know that should sudden misfortune strike, many of your expenses will be paid and your income continued? Won't you rest easier and convalesce more quickly if you know that a policy with this strong company stood ready to lift financial burdens from your shoulders? Just ask yourself NOW—if you met with an accident in your home, on the street, or road, in the field or on your job—will your income stop?

Make up your mind NOW to get *Cash instead of Sympathy!*

NO MEDICAL EXAMINATION
$10 a Year Entire Cost
No Dues. No Assessments.
MEN AND WOMEN
16 to 69 Years Accepted.
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This is a simple and understandable policy—without complicated or misleading clauses. You know exactly what every word means—and every word means exactly what it says.

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Gentlemen: At no cost to me send copy of your booklet "Cash or Sympathy." There is no obligation.

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Largest and Oldest Exclusive Health and Accident Insurance Company in America
Under Supervision of 48 State Insurance Departments
ESTABLISHED OVER 47 YEARS
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Just 7 Days

....that's all I need to PROVE I can make You a NEW MAN!

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Charles Atlas

Holder of the title:
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Won in open competition in the only National and International contests held during the past 15 years

NOTE: *No other Physical Instructor in the World has ever DARED make such an offer!*

ONE week! That's all the time I need. In 7 days I'll PROVE that I can make you over into a *new man of vitality* and *power*.

I'll do for you exactly what I did for myself. I was once a 97-pound weakling. I was sickly, only half alive. I had a flabby namby-pamby body.

How I changed myself from this "below average" physique into the man who won—against all comers—the title of "World's Most Perfectly Developed Man" is an absorbing story. It is told in my book, "Everlasting Health and Strength," which I will send you *absolutely free* if you fill in and mail the coupon below.

It's Easy MY WAY

Big *claims* mean nothing! That is why I offer you more than *promises*. That is why I offer you a 7 days' trial of my famous method, *Dynamic-Tension*. That lets you see for yourself that I back up every promise I make. That PROVES beyond a flicker of a doubt that I *can* and *will* turn you, too, into a vital, powerful NEW MAN.

Thousands of fellows all over the world have used my method—and now you can, too. Like them, you can put on firm layers of muscle where you need them most, tone up your whole system, banish constipation, poor digestion, bad breath, pimples and other conditions that rob you of the good things and good times of life, and get the "drive" that'll take you to the top of the ladder.

I've Got NO USE for Apparatus

I haven't any use for tricky weights or pulleys and machines that may strain your heart and other vital organs. There's nothing unnatural or artificial about this method of mine. And I don't dose you or doctor you. *Dynamic-Tension* is all I need. It's the natural, tested method for developing real men inside and out. It distributes added pounds of powerful muscles over your body, gets rid of ailments and surplus fat, and gives you the vitality, strength and pep that win you the admiration of every woman and the respect of any man.

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Don't be held back by a below-par body! Now you can easily and quickly make this new man of yourself! Do what my thousands of other pupils did—send for a free copy of my illustrated book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." Learn how I built myself up from a weak, no-muscle, always-tired "runt" to winner of the title, "The World's Most Perfectly Developed Man." Gamble a stamp to mail my coupon—to learn how YOU can win the biggest prize in life—a handsome, healthy, husky body. Address CHARLES ATLAS, Dept. 38-C, 133 E. 23rd St., New York, N. Y.

Everlasting Health and Strength

FREE BOOK

Gamble a stamp today. Mail coupon for free copy of my new book, "Everlasting Health and Strength." It shows you from actual photos how I have developed my Pupils to my own perfectly balanced proportions. Where shall I send your copy? Write your name and address plainly on the coupon. Mail it today to me personally.

CHARLES ATLAS
Dept. 38-C
133 East 23rd St.
New York, N. Y.

I want proof that *Dynamic Tension* will make a New Man of me—give me a healthy, husky body and big muscle development. Send free book, "Everlasting Health and Strength."

Name ....
(Please print or write plainly)

Address ....

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I just like to
give you a light
They Satisfy
Chesterfield
Cigarettes
Liggett & Myers Tobacco Co

Chesterfield

the cigarette that's **MILDER** • the cigarette that **TASTES BETTER**

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